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LABOUR AND POLITICS IN SOUTH AFRICA 1939-1964

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Abstract

The core of my dissertation is devoted to a re-interpretation of the history of the liberation movement in South Africa in two critical periods of its development. The first I call in short 'the 1940s' but shall be referring more specifically to the years between 1939 and the rise of apartheid in 1948; the second I call 'the 1950s' but shall refer to the years between the emergence of apartheid and the defeat of the liberation movement in 1964. Both the 1940s and the 1950s were marked by fierce class struggles which brought with them hopes of a new democratic order in South Africa; both closed on the sombre note of defeat for democracy and triumph for the forces of reaction and racism. Motivated by a dissatisfaction with prevailing interpretations, I shall explore what went wrong in these years in order to deepen our understanding of the political culture and social base of the liberation movement. I have focussed on these two historical periods because I see the basic parameters of the contemporary liberation movement as set by the class struggles which occurred within them. My central hypothesis is that, although class relations do not on the whole manifest themselves directly on the surface of the liberation movement, they have nonetheless been the crucial determinants of its pattern of evolution. My introductory chapter will be devoted to a theoretical discussion of the relation between nationalism and socialism in the South Africa liberation movement. It was written after the historical research and its ideas reflect a considerable change of mind which resulted from the research; the ideas expressed within it provide a necessary foundation for understanding what I wish to say through the substantive history. My final section will be an attempt to outline the major lessons which I draw from the history of these class struggles; it focusses on what I see as the unresolved conflict between the two traditions of 'radical liberalism' and 'insurrectionism' which run through the history of the liberation struggle and on defining what I see as the 'absent centre' of this history: social democracy or more accurately the social democratic movement of the working class.

Preface

I should like to thank my supervisor Simon Clarke, my partner Glynis Cousin, and my friends Dennis Davis, Mick O'Sullivan, Clive Bradley, Tom Rigby, Alan Norrie, Tom Schuller, Bill Freund, Daryl Glazer, Duncan Innes, Iain Smith, Baruch Hirson, ^{Robin Cohen} Jonathan Grossman and Martin Thomas for their invaluable advice and help. Writing this after my thesis defence, I should also like to thank my examiners, Stan Trapido and Sam Nolutshungu, for their generosity and critical engagement.

I have used small letters for so-called national groups within South Africa - like african, asian, coloured, white, non-european, european, black - as a small protest against the divisions forced upon the people of South Africa by apartheid. It seems to me that capital letters have a tendency of reifying these political categories. I have used the spelling 'Lutuli' rather than 'Luthuli', as is sometimes to be found.

I have used some concepts in the text that are likely to be unfamiliar to the reader. In particular, I employ the concept of 'the social weight' of the working class and of other classes to refer to the power of a class in relation to the other classes in society. I treat the 'social weight' of the working class as a function of many factors - not all of which are strictly economic. I include relative numbers, concentrations, skills, divisions, organisation and bargaining power. The dynamic purpose of the concept is to allow for a distinction between the 'being' of the class and its consciousness.

I have used the term 'social democracy' in the classical marxist sense as democratic socialism, that is, the coming together of socialist and democratic politics. I do not mean it to refer to the modern notion of 'social democracy' as counterposed to marxist or revolutionary politics. I see the concept of 'social democracy' as referring to a stage of development of marxist politics, embracing both revolutionary and reformist currents. The purpose behind the use of this concept is to provide a basis for criticising what I see as a premature revolutionism; premature in that it 'forgets' the achievements of the Second International in the critique of its limitations and also 'forgets' that marxist revolutionary ideas are thoroughly utopian when divorced from the construction of social democracy.

The critique of reformism in South Africa has often been identified with a critique of reform. What I have tried to argue through the concept of 'social democracy' is the importance of a politics of reform in what Lukacs called the 'bildung' (or 'reformation') of the working class. I

am looking for the concepts which will allow us to pose the problem of the development of the working class in both its consciousness and its material existence: 'social weight', 'social democracy', 'proletarian reformation', 'bildung', 'politics of reform'.

Introduction 1

Professor nationalism, socialism and democracy.

Proletarian revolutions, . . . constantly engage in self-criticism and in repeated interruptions of their own course. They return to what has apparently already been accomplished in order to begin the task again; with merciless thoroughness they mock the inadequate, weak and wretched aspects of their first attempts; they seem to throw their opponent to the ground only to see him draw new strength from the earth and rise again before them, more colossal than ever; they shrink back again and again before the indeterminate immensity of their own goals, until the situation is created in which any retreat is impossible and the conditions themselves cry out; *Hic Rhodus, hic salta*, Here is the rose, dance here, (Karl Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire*) (1)

In the *Eighteenth Brumaire* Marx remarked that, just as in private life a distinction is made between what individuals think and say of themselves and what they really are and do, so too in historical struggles a still sharper distinction must be made between the phrases and fantasies of the parties and their real organisation and interests, between their conception of themselves and what they really are (2). This dissertation is an attempt to apply this observation to the liberation movement in South Africa. It is both a critique of the nationalist lens through which the parties of the liberation movement perceive the history of class struggle in South Africa and a re-construction in class terms of the real history of the liberation movement.

Nothing could be more erroneous than the image of a unitary and homogenised liberation movement moving inexorably towards the final moment of liberation. The imagery of black people as an undifferentiated mass united by a single political consciousness in their opposition to apartheid is a mirror of the very racism they are fighting. The history of class struggle

has been one of debate and dissent, sharp breaks and abrupt turns, competing political organisations and traditions, ad hoc alliances and unpredicted outcomes. We should avoid the temptation to flatten artificially this rocky landscape by drawing a one-dimensional picture of a singular movement, hegemonised by this or that party, for ever advancing with the support of the people to the final goal of liberation. Between the political myth and the real history lies not just a chasm but everything that makes the liberation movement in South Africa so rich and full of revolutionary potential.

I shall not avoid taking sides in the conflicts between rival political parties in the liberation movement; we certainly cannot face the past in doctrinaire fashion with a new principle declaring 'here is the truth, kneel here' (3). We should, however, use the benefits of hindsight to uncover the common premises shared by the different parties and enrich our understanding of their general strengths and limitations. While we can but learn from the old debates - between stalinism and trotskyism, nationalism and socialism, reform and revolution - it is essential that we are not locked in them at the expense of our own intellectual and political development. The common pre-suppositions of the old contenders are sometimes as important as what divided them; simply to take sides and leave it at that is to fail to get to the roots of the matter.

The historiography of the liberation movement is infused with the traditions of the past; it celebrates this or that party, repudiates

others, borrows the names, slogans and costumes of prior struggles - all at the expense of building something that is new. The hardest thing is to construct a consistent mode of criticism, not according to standards which are already given, but rather to participate in the united effort to construct new standards. A starting point which should meet with common agreement is the need not only to celebrate the evolution of the liberation movement but also to confront it critically; drawing lessons from its weaknesses as well as its strengths, its defeats as well as its victories. Critical history of this kind, which employs the same tools to analyse the parties of the oppressed as it does with regard to the parties of the oppressors, should not be seen as 'negative' but rather as developmental; an integral and necessary part, as Marx observed in our opening quotation, of the growth of every proletarian revolution.

The unhappy marriage of nationalism and socialism

The common ground of what we might call the 'orthodox' histories (4) of the liberation movement is that they see the ideal form of political leadership of the liberation movement as a marriage of nationalism and socialism and find the embodiment of this ideal in the alliance of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Communist Party (SACP). Like many private marriages, this political marriage is conceived as both harmonious and unequal, consummated under the banner of african nationalism and on the basis of the voluntary subsumption of socialism. The marriage is justified by the argument that nationalism is both the rational form of opposition to apartheid and the true expression of the consciousness of the masses. The

role of socialists is defined as supportive, indeed as the most consistent and radical supporters of the national liberation struggle.

Nationalism appears within this orthodoxy as the rational political form of the class struggle in South Africa, whose necessity derives from the overwhelming predominance of race over class in the structures of oppression and exploitation. The hegemony of nationalism within the liberation movement appears, in other words, to arise out of its immanent rationality as the political form in which the class struggle is expressed in a society dominated by racialism.

In this preface we take issue with the theoretical premises of the orthodoxy. In our view marxists have acceded too readily to the appeal of nationalism in South Africa, fudging the differences between marxism and nationalism and downplaying the basic fact that marxists are not nationalists. It is one thing for socialists to recognise the progressiveness of nationalism in South Africa and to accept it as a factual condition of their struggle as socialists; it is another simply to welcome nationalism as ideology and programme. The conversion of working class struggle into nationalism has been far less complete than appears within the orthodoxy and is the result not of the triumph of reason but of a definite interplay of class forces which, though hidden beneath the surface of political life, are its real social determinants. Eric Hobsbawm's sweeping but true observation that 'getting their history wrong is an essential characteristic of nations' should be a warning to marxists

not to accept too readily the self-conceptions of the nationalist history (5).

When the Communist Party temporarily dissolved itself in the face of legal repression in 1950, the party historians, Jack and Ray Simons, depicted what they saw as the phoenix arising out of the ashes;

the communists could claim the achievement of an objective that had been central to their purpose since 1928. The class struggle had merged with the struggle for national liberation. (6)

In its early days in the 1920s, so their story goes, the Communist Party of South Africa adopted a crude class analysis which failed to come to grips with the reality of national oppression and in fact oriented to white workers. The so-called 'third period' of the CPSA (1929-34), when it adopted the slogan of 'the Native Republic', was seen as an advance toward the party's understanding of national oppression in South Africa, but the CPSA's own brand of black nationalism was thoroughly sectarian toward the actual leadership of the nationalist parties whom it characterised as 'cowardly' and 'petty bourgeois'.

From the mid-1930s, however, the CPSA's turn towards a people's front with the nationalist movements was seen as a great advance over the sectarianism of the third period, with its new emphasis on the unity of all forces opposed to segregationism; but its inclusion within the popular front of the white labour movement necessarily caught the CPSA in divided loyalties owing to the endemic racism of the latter. In the late 1940s and early

'50s, with the collapse of the white labour movement as an independent political force and the radicalisation of african nationalism, the CPSA turned finally toward the ideal of allying itself with national liberation movement under the banner of african nationalism.

On the other side of this divide, so the Simons' story goes, african nationalism in its early days was a progressive but exclusively middle class movement, not yet involving the great majority of the african people and largely cut off from indians and coloureds. The ANC and other nationalist organisations were usually remote from the masses, seeking advantage for their educated and propertied members alone and using strictly constitutional methods of petition and deputation which were incapable of relating to the masses. There were some early attempts to radicalise african nationalism, as when Gumede was elected President of the ANC in 1927, visited Russia and spoke in glowing terms about Soviet achievements.

The conservative wing under Seme, however, re-asserted its leadership of the ANC at the start of the 1930s; there were some democratic innovations in the 1940s but the ANC remained basically committed to its old methods and goals. With the formation of the ANC Youth League in 1943, its rise to leadership positions in the ANC in 1948, the adoption by the ANC of the Programme of Action in 1949, the entry of Communists into both the Indian Congress and the ANC, and then the practical turn to mass struggle alongside the Indian Congress in the 1952 Defiance Campaign, african

nationalism came of age. For the first time, the ANC set as its goal national liberation of the african people, whose right to leadership of the liberation movement as a whole and of the future South African state was justified by virtue of the african nation being the most numerous, oppressed and indigenious of the nations of South Africa.

In the 1950s, the alliance between socialism and nationalism was formed *de facto* when, with the dissolution of the CPSA, former party members participated actively in the four separate national organisations of the Congress Alliance. Around the end of the decade, the convergence was formalised as the CPSA resurfaced as the SACP, announcing its public identity for the first time since its secret re-birth in 1953. It co-operated closely with ANC members over the formation of Umkonto We Sizwe, the armed wing of Congress, in the early 1960s; it declared its support for the political leadership of the ANC and the ideological hegemony of african nationalism. It adopted with the ANC a mutually agreed analysis of the state as a 'colonialism of a special type', a programme based around the armed struggle and an interlocking leadership. The convergence of nationalism and socialism was nearing completion.

This is of course a caricatured version of the orthodox historiography, but the main point we wish to stress is its belief in the progressive political evolution of the liberation movement toward its *telos*; the marriage of its nationalist and socialist currents under the banner of african nationalism. In the 1970s leading figures in the SACP sought to theorise the political

development of the liberation movement and defend it against those who criticised the subordination of socialism to nationalism,

Jo Slovo agreed with critics of bourgeois nationalism that 'emphasis on the national content of the struggle could ... encourage a disregard of its ultimately class basis' (7), but argued that in South Africa the twin goals of national and social liberation were in fact happily married in the ANC-SACP alliance. For Slovo, the possibility of capitalism surviving the overthrow of apartheid on the basis of a 'future black exploiting class' was not theoretically ruled out but was in practice deemed remote. The black bourgeoisie was too weak and the working class too strong for a 'neo-colonial' solution to emerge; the actual array of political forces was prohibitive of such a scenario. The specific role of the Communist Party, as he saw it, was to serve as the watchdog of the national liberation movement, to insure a steadfast commitment to true liberation and generate socialist consciousness among the 'working masses'. On the basis of this assessment, Slovo drew two conclusions: first that the role of an independent class-based party was historically vital and second that there was an absence of any basic policy divergence between the ANC and the SACP.

Other party theorists sought to develop the class dimension of the marriage of socialism and nationalism further. In a more recent text, Harold Wolpe agreed with Slovo that there was a contingent rather than a necessary relationship between capitalism and racism in South Africa, but drew the conclusion that too close an identification of the national struggle with

the struggle against capitalism had the effect of closing off analysis of the class content of national struggles. He wrote that 'the national struggle does not have a single, anti-capitalist connotation, it will be given a different content by different classes' and criticised the failure of at least one version of nationalist theory to recognise that 'class interests are differentially served or blocked by these (racial) boundaries', and that 'the national struggle ... may incorporate alternative class objectives' (8).

Wolpe concurred with Slovo that nationalism is the form necessarily taken by the struggle against racial oppression, but stressed that it can be filled with different kinds of class content. He raised the theoretical possibility of a bourgeois form of african nationalism in South Africa, but declared his own conviction that no section of the actually existing national liberation movement is committed to or struggles for a 'bourgeois national democratic revolution'. Wolpe argued that 'race may well become the content under specific conditions of the class struggle', an uncontentious view in a society ridden with racial distinctions, although he leaves open the question of whether 'race' or the abolition of racism is the only content of the class struggle in South Africa. Wolpe also, however, endorsed the explicitly nationalist claim made by Stuart Hall that 'race' is or should be the 'modality in which class is lived, the medium through which class relations are experienced, the form in which it is appropriated...' (our emphasis) (9).

The orthodox view of the marriage of socialism and nationalism has usually been associated with what is known as 'two-stage theory'. In the first stage, that of the struggle against apartheid, socialism appears as a junior partner to african nationalism, the role of the socialist party defined in terms of its support for national liberation as well as being bearer of socialist ideas; in the second stage, which begins when apartheid has been overthrown and a national democratic state has been established in its place, socialist objectives come to the fore and the socialist party asserts its claim to leadership.

The Communist Party has in fact interpreted 'two-stage theory' with different emphases: at one moment affirming a rigid separation of stages, the inadmissibility of socialist ideas in the first stage and the 'jumping of stages' which any attempt to introduce socialist objectives would imply. At other times, the Communist Party has sought to link two-stage theory to the idea of an 'ongoing' or 'uninterrupted revolution', according to which socialist ideas are actively propagated prior to national liberation as a necessary springboard for the creation of socialism afterwards (10). Although the relative weight of nationalism and socialism is conceived differently in these various interpretations, they all rest on the same conceptual foundations which may in brief be termed the hegemony of nationalism.

Two-stage theory has not been the monopoly of the Communist Party; we find it propagated, for example, among many trotskyists in the 1930s. More

characteristically, however, South African trotskyism has *counterposed* the theory of 'uninterrupted' or 'permanent revolution' to that of two-stages. Influenced by this tradition, Neville Alexander has argued that the role of two-stage theory has been to relegate working class leadership out of sight to an indefinite future, in his view a tragically faulted strategy given the highly proletarianised nature of South African society. In its place he has called for working class leadership in the immediate struggle against apartheid, setting as its objective 'the liquidation of those institutions and practices which have given rise to national oppression... This means nothing else than the abolition of capitalism itself' (11).

For Alexander, the struggle is at once against racialism and capitalism, against what he sees as 'racial capitalism', the connections between them appearing as immanent rather than contingent. His basic argument is that since racialism is essential to the survival of capitalism in South Africa, the abolition of racialism necessarily entails the abolition of capitalism; the antinomies of nationalism and socialism are resolved by the doctrine that true national liberation is anti-capitalist. Alexander endorses the thesis of permanent or uninterrupted revolution adopted, as he put it, by 'marxists in the Unity Movement and the Communist Party who believed that no power on earth would be able to contain the people's struggle within the confines of bourgeois democracy' and that accordingly 'the revolution would assume a permanent character as a matter of necessity' (12).

Alexander's view of the revolutionary struggle as a continuous process toward the establishment of a socialist order gives the movement from national liberation to socialism a seemingly mechanical certainty:

the struggle cannot be halted at the mere integration of the black people into the existing economic relationships... Today any attempt at integration must infallibly bring about the more or less rapid disintegration of the capitalist system (13).

The immediate political task then is to perfect nationalism rather than to build socialism, or rather to build socialism through perfecting nationalism. Permanent revolution becomes the alchemist of history, turning nationalism into socialism, not through the conscious intervention of human agency and the proliferation of socialist ideas amongst the people, but through the objective laws of social development. Whilst the masses are subjectively nationalist, they become objectively socialist according to the logic of permanent revolution which the leadership alone comprehends.

The antinomies of nationalism

In a recent article Jo Slovo justifies the leading role of the ANC in the alliance in the following terms:

The two most important determinants in the South African socio-economic structure - class and race - have given birth to two complementary streams of revolutionary consciousness and revolutionary organisation, each influencing the other and often standing in alliance on those aims they share in common... *The ANC is the main constituent of the liberation front in its quest for*

immediate majority rule,,. It is a national mass movement representing the African people in whom it has helped to develop a common consciousness and feeling of oneness,. The South African Communist Party,. represents the aspirations of the working class and aims for the eventual establishment of a socialist South Africa, (our emphasis) (14)

This particular passage raises many questions; not least how adequately these two particular political organisations, the ANC and the SACP, are seen as representing the complementary currents of nationalism and socialism. It is of course not enough to rediscover the ideas of african nationalism and socialism in them to prove that they represent their ideal embodiment; such an explanation would merely accept the leadership of the liberation movement as it is in order to declare it rational. The issue which we wish to address, however, is a broader one.

Accepting the view that the struggle for majority rule takes precedence over the struggle against capitalism in South Africa, or, to put it another way, that the struggle against capitalism is in the first instance a struggle for political democracy, the question remains as to the political form in which the democratic struggle is waged. Racial oppression of african and other black people in South Africa has historically led to a variety of political responses among the oppressed; different and sometimes competing forms of african nationalism (witness the historical antagonisms between the ANC and the Pan African Congress or PAC), alternative forms of black nationalism (like Black Consciousness), as well as various currents of socialism and liberalism. The apparent deduction of nationalism from the

struggle against racial oppression conceals the specificity of this particular political response, yet it pervades the orthodox literature to such an extent that the struggle against racism is often equated with its nationalist form, as if no other political form of opposition to racism were feasible.

A parallel may be found for instance in saying that jewish nationalism has been a 'natural' response of jews to anti-semitism rather than explore what differentiated this particular response from other forms of political consciousness among jews. To address the relation between nationalism and socialism in South Africa critically, we need to keep in mind what distinguishes nationalist forms of opposition to apartheid from other actual and possible political forms; in short, to 'denature' the hegemony of african nationalism. A distinction should be made between the struggle for democracy in general and its specific nationalist form,

African nationalism appears in Slovo's writings as the ideal political expression of the consciousness of the 'masses', which he characterises as follows:

for those who have to live the hourly realities and humiliations of race tyranny... there is no issue more immediate and relevant than the experience of national oppression. This is certainly the starting point of political consciousness for every black worker'. (15)

But is the experience of national oppression the starting point of

political consciousness for every black worker? the question needs to be resolved historically rather than philosophically, empirically and not deductively. Although political line of the party is portrayed as a reflection of the consciousness of the masses, in reality the relationship is reversed; the masses are decked out in nationalist colours by a party committed to nationalism.

Underlying this whole approach is the concept of the 'masses', which has played such an important role in the language of the liberation movement. Drawn from outside the terrain of marxism and identified with theories of the right as well as the left, the concept of the 'mass' finds its symbiotic counterpart in the concept of the 'elite'; they are inseparable from each other. In this conceptual model, the great majority of black people appear united by a singular political consciousness - nationalism - whatever other social differences divide them; they enter the political stage as a suffering and rebellious mass but not as rational individuals engaged in political dialogue and debate. Popular consciousness needs to be addressed more concretely and freed from the mental associations which come from the language of the 'masses'. The starting point of political consciousness for workers may be a sense of national oppression; it may also, however, be a sense of low pay or powerlessness in the workplace or indeed of the power which comes from organised labour. Such matters are not pre-determined.

The terms of political debate within the party elites are set by the nationalist mould in which popular consciousness is set. Rather than see parties as what they are, competing political organisations which put forward their own views and represent no more than part of the whole, they appear in more absolutist terms as either representing or failing to represent the consciousness of the masses *in toto*. We see here the roots of an idealised conception of political parties in which celebrationism and betrayal theory are two complementary aspects. The language of 'national movements' rather than 'political parties', which dominates the literature, accentuates the identification of a particular political party with the will of the 'nation' as a whole, concealing or downplaying the distinction between the leadership and those whom it seeks to represent. The result is that political programmes, manifestos and charters are presented not for what they are, the products of particular political organisations appealing for support beyond their own ranks, but rather as the direct expression of the will of the people (16). The language of national movements enables the party to ascribe to the people of their nation a unitary consciousness in its own image and party leaders to appear as natural heads of their nation.

The apartheid state rationalises its division of South Africa into a number of distinct nations, presented as natural entities based on notions of primordial origin, divine mission, spiritual unity, shared culture and especially racial homogeneity; it conceives of nations as corporate units, providing the building blocks of the state as a whole. The state and its ideologues refer to the nations of South Africa in at least three different and conflicting ways. First, under the guise of refurbishing

traditionalism, the state seeks to re-tribalise africans as citizens of their own national homelands and as foreigners in white South Africa. In this vein, the state talks of around ten national groups within the african people as a whole and organises bantustans and even segregates black townships and miners' compounds accordingly. Second, the state accentuates in theory and practice the distinct identities of what it sees as four national groups: whites, africans, asians and coloureds (the earlier tendency to distinguish between afrikaner and english-speaking whites has persisted but in less powerful a form). Lastly, the state pursues a policy of racial oppression affecting all black people as blacks, which magnifies the social distance between blacks and whites in general and overrides all other distinctions. (17)

Parallel to the growth of these three forms of racialism practiced by the state, we find historically three forms of nationalism among the oppressed. One has been centered around the goal of national self-determination defined in terms of avowedly traditional tribal loyalties. It may be illustrated by the Inkatha movement among the Zulu or the National Independence Party in the Transkei. The second has centered around what has been known as four-nation theory, which respects as its starting point the separate national identities of africans, coloureds, asians and whites (sometimes five nations if whites are divided into afrikaner and english-speaking wings). This form of organisation has been most vividly expressed in the four-spoke wheel of the Congress Alliance and the four separate national organisations which comprised it. The third has centered around the unity of all non-europeans or blacks, regardless of all other ethnic

identities, in the face of white oppression and has been expressed in the growth of movements like the Non-European Unity Movement in the 1940s and the Black Consciousness movement in the 1970s (18). All these national identities have been manufactured by the state on the basis of certain real social differentiations among the people but only with the utmost use of repression and resort to totally irrational ways of thinking. The fundamental problem facing all these political forms of nationalism lies in their acceptance of one or other of the racial categories of the state as their own starting point; the limitation of the nationalism of the oppressed lies in its parasitism on the models of nationalism constructed by the oppressors.

The problem was vividly expressed in debates around the organisation of the liberation movement in the 1950s. The democratic vision of the *future* put forward in the 1950s in the Freedom Charter was that South Africa belongs to all, black and white, regardless of racial divisions. The principle of non-racialism was not, however, extended into the organisation of the Congress Alliance, the key to which was that only at the top did individuals from different colour groups come together in single bodies like the National Consultative Committee, while ordinary supporters were hived off into four separate national bodies for africans, indians, coloureds and whites respectively.

In response to critics who argued that such a 'multi-racial' arrangement represented 'voluntary segregation' within the liberation movement (18), Slovo defended it by reference to the 'group consciousness' of the masses; he wrote that while he personally had no principled objection to the idea

of creating a single non-racial organisation to struggle against white rule, it would have appealed in the 1950s only to 'the ideologically advanced' and not to the 'masses'. He saw it as right, therefore, that non-racialism was not imposed by 'advanced decisions from the top', on the grounds that the multi-racial organisation of Congress was a necessary stage in the development of a fully non-racial liberation movement (19).

Slovo's depiction of popular consciousness in the 1950s needs to be tested historically, but his characterisation of the liberation struggle as an anti-colonial movement directed against a 'special type of colonialism', the official doctrine adopted by the Communist Party and the ANC in the early 1960s, introduced the problem of nationalism in another form (20). In normal anti-colonial situations, national liberation stands for the democratic right of the colonised nation as a whole to independence from foreign colonial rule; the struggle for independence is at once linked to the struggle for the unification of the new nation. In the South African case, by contrast, British colonial domination was abolished before the First World War as a result in part of the anti-imperialist struggles of the boers; the subsequent interpretation of democratic struggles as 'anti-colonial' meant that the white section of the South African population was seen as colonisers of South Africa. This theory suggests the division of South Africa into two nations, black and white, rather than a single South African nation belonging to all who live in it. The anti-white logic of this form of nationalism has been softened by the claim that the struggle is not against the colonisers themselves but only against the system of colonialism, and by statements declaring that white people in South Africa should not be seen as a foreign, 'colon' class; the theory of 'colonialism

of a special type', however, remains as the official doctrine of the ANC-SACP leadership of the liberation movement.

Neville Alexander has been one of the most cogent critics of both 'four-nation' theory and the theory of 'colonialism of a special type'. His argument is that the ideology of african nationalism is in fact a pseudo-nationalism, concealing a form of 'colour-caste' consciousness; his own intellectual effort has been directed toward defining a true nationalism purged of this racial taint. Under the slogan of 'one Azania, one nation', he has argued that in the South African context genuine nationalism should be seen not in terms of separatism but rather of unification. If apartheid signifies the balkanisation of South Africa into racial groupings, genuine nationalism signifies the unification of South Africa as a modern nation-state embracing all who live in it.

Alexander's penetrating critique of existing forms of nationalism draws its inspiration from European nationalist movements of the nineteenth century, the crux of which, as the historian Eric Hobsbawm has rightly pointed out, was not so much state independence as such but rather the construction of 'viable' states through the unification of the old principalities; in their world balkanisation was a term of abuse and petty German principalities were a joke (21). If nationalism is, as Tom Nairn has argued, 'Janus-faced', with one face pointing to the past and the other pointing to the future, Alexander has sought to define a nationalism in South Africa which points unequivocally to the future, looking to the construction of a new nation of Azania rather than to the restoration of what he sees as the largely imaginary rights of the primordial 'nations' of South Africa (22).

If nationalism of the oppressed has a tendency, as John Breuilly has argued in his brilliant study of nationalism and the state, to be 'parasitic' on the nationalism of the oppressors, Alexander has sought to define a nationalism which radically breaks from the 'national' categories of the apartheid state (23).

Yet in the writings of Neville Alexander, just as in those of Jo Slovo, there has been a tension between the vision of a new non-racial nation in the future and the immediate perspectives of the liberation movement. At the same time as he argues that the immediate task of the liberation movement is the abolition within its own body of all pseudo-nationalisms based on 'colour-caste' categories, he also affirms that the class struggle in South Africa must take a nationalist form because of 'the colour-caste framework' of apartheid. He seeks to resolve the conflict by defining the nation of Azania as 'all the people who are prepared to throw off the yoke of capitalist exploitation and racist oppression' (24); this political definition of the nation leaves unspecified the status of those who do not embrace this dual struggle; the impression is given that nationhood is a reward for being on the right side politically. His reference to the black working class as the only class fully prepared to throw off the yoke of capitalist exploitation and racist oppression would imply by his own logic that the black working class will constitute the new nation of Azania and decide who else to admit.

Alexander's political conception of the new nation seems to exclude from its boundaries those not prepared to throw off the double yoke of oppression and exploitation. It raises the further question of why a new

form of nationalism, based on a commitment to 'the nation of South Africa still struggling to be born', should serve as an ideal against which to assess the historical forms of tribal, african and black nationalism. Is not pan-South African nationalism yet another facet of the ideology of the existing state, more or less consciously articulated by the 'liberal' wing of the ruling class, and was it not historically represented in the person of General Smuts prior to 1948? If so, can we say that this form of nationalism succeeds in emancipating itself from the nationalism of the state, where others have fallen short?

The bourgeois unification of South Africa took place long ago in the reconstruction years after Anglo-Boer War, when the establishment of a single government, currency, legal system and transport network (the four pillars of the modern state) marked the beginnings of South Africa as an independent, unitary state. Most of its citizens were denied political rights, which was not unusual in young bourgeois states, most of which imposed gender and property qualifications on suffrage. What was unusual in South Africa was the form of exclusion by virtue of the national or racial status allocated to its citizens; subsequently the government of South Africa posited the myth of separate national identities and homelands but this in no way alters the historical fact that the bourgeois tasks of building a unitary state have been accomplished. The struggle now is to replace apartheid with democracy, not the unification of the state; the liberation of South Africa from its racist political superstructure might well be accompanied by a growth of South African nationalism, but whether this should be encouraged by socialists is another matter.

The status of this pan-South African nationalism needs to be reviewed in its own right, in relation both to the independent interests of the working class in South Africa itself and to the interests of solidarity with oppressed people beyond the existing borders of the South African state. Where will the nation of South Africa 'still struggling to be born' draw its borders? should it include or exclude Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland? how would this 'new' nationalism feed into the creation of a wider vista of political association reflected in the idea of a future United States of Southern Africa (25)? The associations which run through Alexander's work, between on the one side bourgeois leadership and 'colour-caste' forms of pseudo-nationalism and on the other proletarian leadership and an Azanian or pan-South African form of 'true nationalism', fail to resolve in our view the larger question of why nationalism in general should be the political form of the working class struggle for democracy.

The key point is whether any form of nationalism can constitute a consistently democratic opposition to apartheid. One form of nationalism provides a remedy for the defects of another; african nationalism for the defects of tribalism, black nationalism for the defects of african nationalism, pan-South African nationalism for the defects of black nationalism, left nationalism with a programme of economic and social reform for the defects of bourgeois nationalism. These are vital distinctions, the importance of which we do not wish to downplay; it is wrong to equate all forms of nationalism as representing basically the same political phenomenon (26); yet they do not address the fundamental defect of nationalism itself in South Africa, its failure to transcend the racial terms of reference set by its enemy. Nationalism has undoubtedly been an

enormous source of empowerment to black people but it should not be rationalised as an ideal form of political consciousness. This is not to deny the material roots of black nationalism in South African society nor the importance of relating constructively to it; it is not simply to 'reject' nationalism, which has of course played a vital role in the struggle against racial oppression; it is rather to reject its idealisation in the language of the liberation movement.

The tendency of South African marxism to put itself at the mercy of nationalism is not unique; it has been reflected in many countries in which national issues dominate political debate. Writing about the Arab Middle East, Maxime Rodinson has put the matter well:

On the one hand, pure nationalism utilised justifications of a Marxist kind and recruited apologists formed by Marxism... On the other international leftism... vigorously denounced the pure nationalist regimes... But it did not give any less priority to the national struggle. The sophisticated device for justifying this consisted in the thesis that 'the masses' were the ones to show unqualified loyalty to the nationalist cause in its most extreme form... Social revolution was therefore seen in what was in the final analysis a nationalist perspective. Thereby it runs the risk of subordination to nationalism. (27)

Hobsbawm was right when he said that one does not have to be a Luxemburgist to recognise the dangers of a marxism which loses itself in nationalism. Lenin was referring to the clearest case of 'revolutionary' anti-imperialist nationalism when he warned his comrades at the Baku Congress of 1920: 'Do not paint nationalism red' (28). The warning still stands.

The antinomies of socialism

The other side of the question of nationalism is the place given to class politics in the nationalist frame of reference. The general argument which we find in both the orthodox and revisionist literature is that, as far as the struggle against apartheid is concerned, class politics are an irrational form of political expression. Slovo argues on the following lines:

Can we posit for South Africa a classic political confrontation between the working class (black and white)... against the capitalist class (black and white)... Such a perspective in the contemporary scene is a nonsensical one... This becomes immediately apparent if we examine the dual nature of the exploitation to which the black worker is subjected. As a *worker* the fruits of his labour are appropriated by the owners of the means of production... but in addition as a *black* worker he has particular disabilities to contend with... The white workers constitute an exclusive privileged group... which is politically integrated into the ruling class so as to play an active role in maximising the exploitation of the black worker. In such a context it would be pedantic to maintain that the black and white workers are political brothers. (29)

A similar argument is to be found in Alexander, who writes as follows:

According to this view, held by a very small minority of people, our struggle is not a struggle for national liberation. It is a class struggle pure and simple, one in which the 'working class' will wrest power from the 'capitalist class'. For this reason the workers should be organised regardless of what so-called group they belong to. This tendency seems to say (in theory) that the historically evolved differences are irrelevant or at best of secondary importance. I find it difficult to take this position

seriously, I suspect that in practice the activists who hold this view are compelled to make the most acrobatic compromises with the reality of racial prejudice among 'workers'. To deny the reality of prejudice and perceived differences, whatever their origin, is to disarm oneself strategically and tactically. It becomes impossible to organise a mass movement outside the ranks of a few thousand perhaps. (30)

Can we accept the arguments behind this rejection of a 'classical' class perspective on the struggle? The fact that black workers are subjected to a dual exploitation as blacks and as workers does not rule out the possibility that they may confront racism from a socialist rather than nationalist standpoint; the fact that most white workers will oppose a class-based, non-racial socialist movement provides no reason at all why black workers should not organise themselves on class lines. Can we accept the view that the class organisation of workers, 'regardless of what so-called group they belong to', only appeals to a few thousand socialist intellectuals? Is this not after all the basis of the non-racial trade union organisation involving over a million workers in COSATU? If this is possible in the sphere of trade unionism, why is it impossible in politics?

To organise on non-racial class lines and to espouse socialist ideas does not mean a denial of 'the reality of prejudice and perceived differences' but rather a refusal to admit those prejudices into the ranks of the liberation movement. Even if it were the case that the 'masses' are infused with nationalist sentiments and resistant to socialist ideas, the leadership of the liberation movement does not have to deny this reality in order to argue for socialism nor deny socialism to respect this reality. The role of the leadership is not just to follow the people, or its own

image of popular consciousness, but to offer what it sees as an effective way forward to the achievement of democracy.

It seems to us that the rational core of the nationalist critique of class politics is that the democratic aspect of the struggle against apartheid cannot be reduced to a working class struggle against capital. It is sterile and sectarian to present the liberation movement as just socialist rather than democratic; it is of course both. The question is that of their interconnections. The characterisation of class politics as 'workerist' which we find in much of the contemporary literature is based on the notion that it insists on an immediate struggle for socialism regardless of all democratic questions, that it repudiates inter-class alliances in the struggle against apartheid and that it reduces the class struggle to the economic struggles between workers and employers at the point of production (31). This hat may or may not fit the heads of certain political currents in South African socialism, but what concerns us here is the idea that a working class socialist party is by nature less equipped to lead the democratic struggle than an 'all-class' nationalist movement. Behind this consensus lies not only an idealised image of revolutionary nationalism but also a diminished conception of socialism.

The orthodox view of the place of socialism in the struggle against apartheid places into question the independent existence of an avowedly socialist party. For the political tradition represented by Alexander this is not a problem since it abandons altogether the idea of a working class party in favour of revolutionary nationalism. For the Communist Party, which claims to represent the working class and affirms the need for an

independent socialist organisation, the problem of justifying the party has to be resolved. Slovo argues that, while the working class or rather the advanced guard of the working class may develop socialist ideas, it should subsume its socialism for the sake of a popular alliance with the many other black people who are against apartheid but not yet for socialism (32).

To espouse socialism, Slovo believes, would be tantamount to eschewing all alliances in the fight against apartheid for the sake of a doctrinaire class perspective. The real issue is not whether the advanced section of the working class, that is, organised industrial labour, should form alliances with other groups in a common struggle against apartheid - of course it must - but rather with whom and on what terms alliances are formed. It cannot be taken for granted that socialist leadership would cut out all support beyond organised labour nor conversely that african nationalism provides the best possible shell for unity against apartheid.

Slovo recognises that in a highly proletarianised country like South Africa, the working class - broadly defined as those who sell their labour for wages - forms the great majority of the people and to a large measure comprises what are called 'the masses'; he bases the claim of the party to represent the working class not on their conscious ideas which he sees as basically nationalist, but on their objective class interests of which most workers are themselves unaware. The party becomes the guardian of socialism, self-consciously substituting for the working class until the stage is reached until socialism can be put on the popular agenda. His conception of the party is self-consciously vanguardist.

Consistent with this position, Jo Slovo opposes the extension of socialist ideas into any of the mass organisations of the movement, Trade unions should be political, he argues, but identify themselves with african nationalism and not with socialism, He writes;

The premature attempt to formally incorporate the objective of socialism into trade unions and the federation to which they belong... would narrow the mass character of the trade union movement by demanding an unreal level of political consciousness from its members or affiliates as a condition of joining. (33)

Similarly he argues that as the head of a nationalist movement the ANC does not and should not adopt a socialist platform... it correctly welcomes within its ranks all liberation fighters whatever their class affiliation who support revolutionary nationalism (34).

At the same time as Slovo separates socialism from the mass organisations of the liberation movement, he characterises the Communist Party - the party that 'represents the aspirations of a single class, the proletariat' - as therefore 'not a mass movement'. Slovo recognises that in South Africa, a largely proletarianised country with a relatively small black peasantry and middle class, the working class is the vast majority of the population. In what sense then should the party of the working class not be a mass party? It is not because it represents only one class rather than the people as a whole, since this one class comprises most of the people as a whole; the reason must lie elsewhere.

The key, we think, is to be found in the dissociation of the socialist and democratic aspects of the struggle; this is vividly expressed in Slovo's views on inner-party democracy. He endorses the democratic forms of organisation and practices built up in the non-racial trade unions as

'appropriate for workers in economic struggles against their bosses' but *in principle* rejects their extension into a working class political party. He portrays such a project as 'a paralysing extravagance' which would lead to 'organisational constipation', arguing that the trade union model of 'public elections, complete participation of the membership in all decision-making, day-to-day accountability of officials, etc.' cannot and should not be applied to the broader political struggle (35).

In part is this a response to the problems of illegality which demand secrecy and therefore a necessary limitation on democracy within the party; more fundamentally, however, Slovo argues that a genuine workers' leadership has to be in the form of a vanguard party which represents the 'historic aspirations' of the working class but does not involve the workers themselves. He rejects mass workers' parties based on the trade unions, like the Labour Party in Britain or the Workers Party in Brazil, as likely to 'pursue social democratic rather than revolutionary objectives' (36); seemingly not because of the bureaucratic controls such parties impose over the masses but rather because of their mass democratic character itself. For Slovo, the identification of the masses with nationalism finds its counterpoint in the identification of socialism with the party.

The roots of the dissociation of socialism and democracy are perhaps to be found in the authoritarian models of socialism identified with stalinist parties in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In the past the Communist Party used to make frequent reference to the Soviet Union as an ideal socialist state whose defence should be the absolute priority of all socialists; this view was reproduced by many South African trotskyists and

other independent socialists who broke from the Communist Party itself but not from the ideas which informed it. Once socialism is dissociated from democracy, there are only two possibilities; either before the gates of the democratic site of struggle a large and forbidding sign is erected which declares; 'all ye who enter here, assemble under the banner of nationalism'; or alternatively the democratic site of struggle is abandoned altogether in favour the war of class against class. When we examine the history of both the official Communist and trotskyist wings of South African socialism, we find these modes alternating with each other,

For the working class in South Africa to fight under its own banner and by its own methods for democratic rights is an essential part of its fight for socialism. As a political subject, the working class does not stand for socialism rather than democracy but for socialism through democracy; what this means is the renewal of the democratic content of socialism itself. Socialist democracy or democratic socialism is not the same as bourgeois democracy but neither is it a related species of animal; it does not signify the negation of bourgeois democracy but rather its extension beyond the limits imposed by capitalist exploitation. The apposite term which Marx rightly used to characterise his own view of socialism was that it represented the 'positive supercession' of bourgeois democracy and not its 'abstract negation'; this remains an important point of reference (37).

These days many in the liberation movement speak and write of 'the leading role of the working class'. In addressing the question of what this means we have sought to challenge the hegemony of nationalism and in particular the arguments of those socialists who serve as the ideological guardians of

nationalism. We have sought to put socialism back on the map as the political form in which working class leadership of the democratic struggle should be pursued if it is to be more than a formality. At the same time we have argued that the subsumption of socialism to nationalism results in part from real weaknesses in the socialist camp in its relation to the democratic tasks of the South African revolution. The dissociation of socialism and democracy leads either to the prevailing view that democratic questions are the province of nationalism or to the reduction of democracy to the class struggle for socialism. The absent centre of this political discourse is the socialist struggle for democracy or in the language of classical marxism social democracy.

The question of strategy

We do not wish to address in this preface substantive issues concerning the strategies adopted by the liberation movement, but we do wish to address the conceptual framework in which these issues are addressed. What we take issue with is a tendency we see to legitimise the particular strategies of particular parties in the liberation movement as the only rational course of action that could have been adopted in the circumstances of the time. Party strategies appear to be dictated on the one hand by constraints from above, notably the state, and on the other by the prevailing consciousness of the masses from below; the party appears as the rational vanguard of the movement, left 'no choice' by circumstance but to adopt the strategies which it did adopt.

In this approach the diversity of political views and the political debates over what was to be done in a given situation are ironed out in favour of the apparent inevitability and immanent rationality of the decisions which were finally reached. We are reconciled to the idea that there were no serious alternatives and no real choices, since the leadership did what any rational leadership would have to do. Conflicting strategies are either hidden from history or portrayed as irrational and out of tune with the consciousness of the masses. This conception seems to us to conceal the nature of strategic choices as the visible and tangible expression of particular parties seeking to make sense of their situation and act upon it; it generates a language of absolutes, of the idealisation of the party on the one side and of accusations of betrayal on the other.

This problem is particularly evident in addressing the problem of the defeats suffered by the liberation movement. The tendency is either to normalise them as having nothing to do with the policies of the leadership or to attribute them exclusively to defects of leadership. The normalisation of failure takes many forms. The reality of defeat may simply be ignored in favour of the celebration of the struggle; the defeats suffered by the movement may be explained through external factors, state repression from above and the defects of the masses from below, on the assumption that there was nothing which the party itself could have done differently to change the course of the struggle; the reality of defeat may be denied, presented instead as merely an apparent defeat disguising a real advance; or finally the defeat may be naturalised as a necessary moment in the progress of every revolutionary movement toward ultimate goal. We find

many examples of these interlocking methods of normalisation in the literature.

For example, we shall see that the suppression of the 1946 african mineworkers' strike looked like a failure for the labour movement since the miners lost their demands, their union collapsed and the black trade union movement as a whole suffered a terrible defeat. According to the left historian, Dan O'Meara, however, it was only an 'apparent failure' since in his words it represented a 'milestone' in South Africa's political development. He wrote as follows:

It profoundly affected the direction and thrust of African opposition. Patient constitutional protest by an elite rapidly gave way to mass political action... The strike and the state's response illustrated the futility of constitutional protest pursued so long by the ANC... While it was followed by the development of the ANC into a mass nationalist movement, the purely class organisation and mobilisation of the African proletariat, which reached its peak in 1945-46, began to decline as proletarian discontent was channelled increasingly into political opposition in the ANC... The aftermath of the strike saw the merging of most elements of African opposition into a class alliance articulating a radical nationalist ideology. (38)

In this account, the failure of the strike was turned into success by what was seen as its political consequence; the convergence of socialism and nationalism under the banner of a radical nationalist ideology which emerged out of it. This account causally links two events which were distinct in time and place, the failure of the strike and the recruitment of workers to the nationalist movement; its premise seems to be that the collapse of class organisation which followed the strike mattered less than the strengthening of african nationalism which later ensued.

When Jo Slovo confronted the fact that most of the campaigns waged by Congress in the 1950s failed if measured by the yardstick of 'immediate achievements', he placed inverted commas around these 'failures' on the grounds that failure is inevitable in any revolutionary process:

'Failure' measured in such narrow terms has been the universal experience of every revolutionary movement. Until the moment of successful revolutionary take-over, each individual act of resistance usually fails and is often crushed... In this sense 'failure' is the constant companion of all political endeavour by a dominated group which is not yet capable of winning power... It is often through the experience of these so-called failures that the masses begin to understand the need for conquering state power and thus for revolution. (39)

Slovo used a similar method when writing about the ANC's turn to armed struggle in the 1960s; conceding that here too the results in their 'narrow immediate sense' were a failure, he attributed it on the one hand to the repressiveness of the state and its imperialist allies and on the other to the declining militancy of the masses and lack of support from independent African states. He defended, however, the broad conception behind the ANC strategy which he said could 'not be faulted' (40); what went wrong was only that 'the objective obstacles to the implementation of such a plan in the 1963 South African situation were not properly appreciated'. Slovo conceded that serious errors were committed by the leadership - 'the importance of mass work was theoretically appreciated but in practice mass work was minimal' (41) - but this defect was presented as a stepping stone to a higher form of struggle; 'a useful bridge', as he put it, 'between the period of non-violent campaigning and the future people's armed struggle'.

No liberation movement can ensure victory in all its struggles and there is truth to the view expressed by Dan Guerin in his history of the French Revolution that 'no defeat is fruitless' since it is 'in defeat that revolutionaries educate themselves and the revolution comes to a greater self-awareness' (42). Yet defeats may also cause terrible damage to the liberation cause, while conversely revolutionary confidence may be built on the foundation of small victories and partial reforms. The experience of failure may be a catalyst for radicalism but also for disillusion and powerlessness. What seems to us important is to avoid the *a priori* transmutation of failure into success and dissociation of failure from the question of strategy. If defeats are simply normalised after the event and the strategies of the leadership absolved of all responsibility, the result is more likely to be one of self-delusion than self-awareness.

Betrayal theory is the other side of this methodological coin. Were it not for those who betrayed the people, it is said, the revolution would have succeeded. We endorse Engels' comment on this way of thinking when writing of the defeat of the German revolution of 1848. Against those who said that it was 'Mr This or That Citizen who "betrayed" the people', Engels declared;

Which reply may be very true or not according to circumstances, but under no circumstances does it explain anything - not even show how it came to pass that the 'people' allowed themselves to be thus betrayed. And what a poor chance stands a political party whose entire stock-in-trade consists in the knowledge of the solitary fact that Citizen So-and-so is not to be trusted. (43)

It makes no difference if in place of Citizen So-and-so we substitute this or that party. The exposition of the causes of revolutionary convulsions

and their suppression in South Africa cannot be reduced to the rehearsal of petty quarrels and recriminations which mean nothing to those not familiar with the details of South African political history. Engels wrote of those who blamed the members of the German Provisional Government for the defeat of the revolution;

No man in his senses will ever believe that eleven men, mostly of very indifferent capacity either for good or for evil, were able in three months to ruin a nation of thirty six millions, unless those thirty six millions saw as little of their way before them as the eleven did. (44)

The real question is not to find the traitor on whom to affix blame but rather to discover in Engels' words 'how it came to pass that thirty six millions were at once called upon to decide for themselves which way to go, although partly groping in dim twilight, and how then they got lost and their old leaders were for a moment allowed to return to their leadership' (45). In the historiography of the liberation movement in South Africa there is no shortage of accusations of betrayal on all sides but they explain very little.

Alongside the danger of relating strategy to failure lies that of pre-supposing the progressive nature of every strategic turn. The strategic development of the liberation movement is often understood as a sequence of distinct historical phases, each one representing a higher stage of political consciousness and activity than the last and culminating in the ideal formation. In one version we find three strategic periods identified: the long constitutional period of petitions and deputations coming to a close toward the end of the 1940s; the period of mass non-violent struggle in the 1950s; and finally the period of armed struggle in the 1960s. In

more recent versions the first period of petitions is relegated to the pre-history of the national liberation struggle and a fourth period is appended at the end; the integration of mass and armed struggle said to be characteristic of the contemporary movement (46).

The transition from petitions to mass struggle to armed struggle and finally to the unity of armed and mass struggle appears as a rational progression from protest to challenge, reform to revolution; perhaps for the party, although it may claim to have understood all along the imperatives of revolution, but certainly for the masses who learnt their revolutionary lessons from the bitter fruits of experience. The history of the liberation movement is presented in this light as an inexorable process of progressive evolution as each phase plays its part in setting the stage for the new approach. In its most idealised formulations, the history of the liberation struggle is seen as advancing from the thesis of mass struggle, to the antithesis of armed struggle and finally to the synthesis of mass and armed struggle. We want to argue that the presumption of progress needs to be suspended if we are to assess critically the strategic choices made by the parties of the liberation movement.

This kind of analysis reflects the rigid separations established by the party between its various strategic periods; it re-inforces what we have termed a 'sequential exclusivism', according to which certain methods are reserved for one period and certain other methods for another, ruling out the more fluid inter-connections revealed in the struggles of the working class (47). Should the 1940s be called an 'age of petitions' not only for the ANC but also for the working class and the other political parties

which sought to win influence over the masses? Was the turn to mass struggle at the end of the 1940s a turn of the ANC to the masses or a turn of the masses to struggle? Were the 1950s a period of non-violent struggle for the working class as well as for the political leadership? Was the turn of the ANC, SACP and other political groups to armed struggle in the 1960s a turn of the working class to arms? To answer these questions, we need to break from a method which fuses the strategies adopted by the political leadership with the liberation struggle as a whole.

The very language in which strategies are characterised - according to their formal qualities of legality and illegality, non-violence and violence - makes no direct reference to the social relations between party and class which are expressed and concealed in these categories. If we attribute all the defects of the strategies adopted in the 1950s to their legal and non-violent character, the solution of illegal armed struggle seems naturally to follow as a liberation from these constraints; but viewed from the perspective of its class content, the formal progression from constitutional protest to revolutionary challenge may take on a quite different significance.

The reification of the state

The question of strategy is intimately associated with that of the state. The neo-classical analysis of the state identifies the ideal capitalist state with the free play of market forces and characterises apartheid as a violation of this ideal. The roots of apartheid are traced back to factors which are quite independent of capital, especially the heritage of racism

from the colonial era and the bid for power of the afrikaner nationalists. The rational market requirements of capital are seen as fundamentally at odds with the status-ridden nature of the apartheid state; however much capital might have to come to terms with apartheid, the underlying antagonism between the free movement of capital and the racial superstructure of the state appears as a basic contradiction in the apartheid system. (48)

The left orthodoxy which has grown up in opposition to the neo-classical model explains the apartheid state in class terms as a form of political domination based on the super-exploitation of black labour and the incorporation of white labour. There are different emphases on what was crucial to the formation of the apartheid state - the general functions of labour control, the decline of the reserves, the growth of a modern industrial proletariat, the legacy of colonialism, fears of working class militancy - but what holds all these explanations together is that the functional requirements of capital are seen as the major determinant of the state (49).

We do not wish to rehearse here the extensive debates which have taken place between these two approaches. It seems to us that the left orthodoxy has the particular virtue of explaining racism as the product of the alienated forms of social life, rather than simply accept it as an independent tradition or variable, and of explaining capitalism as a class relation of exploitation rather than simply as a rational system of market exchange. What the left orthodoxy forgets, though, is that capital itself is not a thing but an expression of a class relation to labour. Just as the

capitalist class does not exist in a vacuum but in a definite relation to other classes in society, so too the form of the state is determined by the shifting relations of production between the classes and not by the needs and fears of the capitalist class in isolation. If the concept of 'relations of production' is to be taken seriously as a determinant of the political forms of social life, the form of the state should not be isolated from the struggles of the working class. (50)

While both forms of analysis trace in different ways the effects of the apartheid state on the forms of struggle of the liberation movement, they both neglect (though in different ways) the effects of class struggles from below on the form of the state. What they have in common is that the dynamics of state formation are abstracted from their base in the class struggle. The left orthodoxy refers to the black working class as a victim of state power but not as an active determinant in the process of state formation; an image which reflects the juridic forms of political life in South Africa, in so far as they are shaped by the denial of civil and political rights to black people, but one which reproduces the state's own illusion of autonomy from the class struggle. It leaves invisible the actual effects of working class struggles on the state, with the possible exception of those of white workers. (51)

There are marxist accounts of apartheid which seek to break from economic determinism by making reference to the struggles of the working class. For example, in his very interesting study of the rise of afrikaner nationalism Dan O'Meara has argued that 'the HNP came to power as a result of a protracted and complex political crisis in which the fierce class struggles

of the 1940s rendered the state unable to secure the requisite conditions of accumulation for all capitals '(52); in his view the crucial determinant of this political crisis lay in the growing numbers, organisation and militancy of black proletariat. Similarly, Saul and Gelb wrote of 'the rapid escalation of Black resistance to the exploitative racial capitalist system' and the 'dramatic escalation of trade union organisation and working class militancy' in the 1940s which resulted in the 'South African ruling circles... (being) shaken to the core' (53). O'Meara, Saul and Gelb agree that the specific function of apartheid was to suppress these class struggles and restore the conditions of capital accumulation; as O'Meara put it:

The HNP victory marked a decisive shift in the balance of forces in the South African state. Though often depicted as 'anti-capitalist', paradoxically it was the new ruling party... which was to secure the conditions of rapid accumulation for all capitals... Apartheid secured the interest of the entire capitalist class... primarily through savage repression of working class organisations... By the early 1960s draconian legislation seemed to have broken the back of mass resistance. (54)

The rise of apartheid appears as an ideal adaptation to the needs of capital faced by the spectre of the black proletariat.

These accounts put the struggles of workers at the centre of their picture but leave unresolved the central democratic question; if there was such a powerful escalation of working class militancy in the 1940s, why was it unable to carve out a more democratic future for South Africa? why could it not compel the ruling classes to recognise the labour movement and come to terms with its demands? why did it fail to push the rulers of South Africa at least into some form of accomodation, as the liberal wing of the South

African bourgeoisie favoured, rather than see the state captured by its mortal foes? why as it not able to overthrow segregationism and its more extreme afrikaner nationalist variants? To answer these questions, should we not reverse the conventional wisdom; rather than see the rise of apartheid as a response to working class militancy and the means of its suppression, was it not the defeat of the working class movement in the 1940s which made possible the rise of apartheid?

The neo-classical theorists have emphasised what they see as the necessity of state reform which the development of capitalism brings in its wake, as the antagonisms between apartheid and capital grow ever sharper. They have also identified the agents of reform in the shape of both capitalists and workers who are seen as having a common interest in winning reform of apartheid whatever other conflicts divide them. The political strategy they are generally associated with is liberal democratic; to cement an alliance between progressive capital, organised labour and the liberal politicians around a consensual programme of reform from above and self-restraint from below. (55)

In response to the profound weaknesses of South African reformism, the view has developed on the left that any apparently liberal reforms introduced by the state are in reality but new means of ideological subterfuge, control over black workers, co-optation of a black elite or some other way of satisfying the needs of capital. The impossibility of genuinely liberal or democratic reform under apartheid is so frequent a refrain of this discourse that the very idea of 'reform' in the context of the apartheid state is bound by inverted commas. It may be acknowledged that certain

'reforms' introduced by the state have changed the terrain of struggle, so that resistance was not only directed against overt oppression but also widened to oppose co-optation; it may be acknowledged too that at certain times the state was forced to introduce 'reforms' in order to limit the effects and derail the course of popular struggles. Ruled out within this frame, however, is the possibility that real democratic changes have ever been or could ever be forced upon the apartheid state from below.

From the premise that apartheid cannot be reformed out of existence, the conclusion is drawn that no reform conceded by the apartheid state is ever a real reform. Bourgeois liberalism has tended to appear as little more than a deceit, fulfilling the functions of the wolf all the more dangerously for the sheep's clothings it wears (56). The past struggles of the liberation movement to win limited state reforms appear either as a limitation of the leadership which it learnt to surpass in the course of its own revolutionary development or as a necessary means of educating the masses out of their reformist illusions; in their place came the strategy of non-collaboration, non-participation and boycott of the state.

To rule out the theoretical possibility that the working class could force the apartheid state to make democratic concessions is no less of a dogmat than the neo-classical dream of the inevitability of reform. Both are rooted in the reification of the state as an independent power divorced from the class struggle. Reform is the state's response to the struggles of the working class within the material limits of its own capacities; to wait for a state reform which does not seek to entrap the very forces to which

concessions are made is to wait for ever, but this does not nullify the possibility of reform.

In contrast to liberal reformism on the one hand and the left repudiation of all reform on the other, we should see the struggle for definite state reform as an integral element of the struggle for the organisation of a conscious working class (57). The point is absolutely central as far as the creation of a working class orientation in the liberation movement is concerned. We should break from the idea that winning reforms simply corrupts those workers who benefit from them or that failure to win reforms is simply a catalyst for radicalism; we should remember that reforms may significantly improve the quality of life of workers as well as their capacity for organisation and struggle; we should ask as Marx did whether the struggles of the working class exist for the sake of the revolution or the revolution for the sake of the working class.

The equation of reform and reformism is the product of a view of the state which insulates it from the impact of class struggle and of a view of the liberation movement which insulates it from any measure of efficacy in terms of its impact on the state or improvement of the lives of the people (until, that is, the final moment of liberation). Sometimes the very savagery of state repression appears as an index of the effectiveness of the liberation struggle. At issue here is not the advocacy of reform rather than revolution and certainly not the endorsement of state reforms; it is rather a question of how the foundations of working class power are built.

When we write of social democracy as the absent centre of South African liberation politics, it is above all to re-construct the relation between the organisation of a conscious working class and the democratic reform of the state as the twin aspects of what one marxist writer has aptly called 'the epoch of the proletarian Reformation' (58).

CHAPTER 2

Industry and Black Labour

Introduction

As South Africa emerged out of the Depression in the mid-1930s, a dozen virtually uninterrupted years of industrial growth transformed South African capitalism and with it the black section of the working class. Black people were drawn into industrial production as wage workers and concentrated in the towns as urban residents. The conditions of labour which they found in secondary industry were hard but more favourable to working class organisation than the servile and abject conditions suffered by the great majority of black people who worked in agriculture, domestic labour, mining and the informal sector of the urban economy. Compared to most black people, industrial workers were both materially and juridically better off; they had more rights; they earned higher wages; they were more exposed to the political ideas of trade unionism, socialism and nationalism associated with modern labour movements; they were in a better position to share these ideas socially and put them into practice in the form of collective action. It was this group which provided the main social base for the development of the black labour movement in the latter half of the 1930s and in the course of the Second World War. On their own they were a relatively small group of workers, but they were able to link up with the fierce rebelliousness of black miners and other migrant labourers, feed into the urban community movements and to a lesser extent the protests of rural africans, and even draw support from some sections of the white working class.

The special role of the black industrial working class was recognised at the time by contemporary trade union organisers. A leading figure in the registered trade union movement, Solly Sachs, put the matter thus:

There is far more competition for jobs in industry, African factory workers, although subjected to many restrictions, can change their jobs ... more freely than in mining or agriculture. A breach of contract is a criminal offence for Africans even in industry, but contracts of service can be terminated by a week's or month's notice, whereas in the mines these contracts are binding for about a year and on the farms for a minimum of six months... African workers in industry have possibilities of improving their skill and efficiency and obtaining higher wages. The majority do not live in compounds and when they finish their day's work they are free from the control of their employers. Above all, many African workers have been able to organise themselves, in spite of tremendous obstacles, into trade unions and to fight for better conditions. (1)

The marxist historiography of South Africa has also stressed the new impetus which the growth of the industrial labour force in the 1940s gave to the democratic movement as a whole. Martin Legassick, for instance, has cited in this context the relevance of Marx's famous observation in the *Communist Manifesto* that with the development of industry 'the proletariat not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows and it feels that strength more' (2). This new class force on the South African social landscape appeared as a powerful motor of democratic change. Its struggles did not culminate, however, in the triumph

of democracy nor even the winning of liberal reforms, but rather in defeat at the hands of reaction wrapped in the colours of afrikaner nationalism.

What happened to the growing forces of the industrial working class which led to this terrible outcome? The prevailing explanation on the left runs along the following lines. Starting in 1934, rapid economic growth, highlighted by the particularly rapid development of secondary industry, led to a vast and irreversible growth of the urban and industrial black proletariat. This provided the material foundation for the mushrooming of trade union organisation and the dramatic escalation of black militancy which occurred in the 1940s. In open defiance of constituted law and order, there was an upsurge of black resistance against the racial capitalist system. The militancy of the african proletariat stimulated a steady growth of political opposition by the black middle classes during the war, marked especially by the revival of the ANC, the formation of the ANC Youth League and the waging of joint campaigns by the ANC and the Communist Party. The violent suppression of the 1946 African mineworkers strike acted as a further catalyst to the radicalisation of black political opposition.

According to this analysis the state was thrown into a profound crisis by these developments. Torn between its liberal and ultra-segregationist wings, it vacillated over how to respond and deep divisions entered its ranks. The rising class struggles led to a progressive paralysis of state policy after the war and the increasing collapse of its political control

and ideological hegemony. As a result of working class militancy, culminating in the miners' strike of 1946, South African ruling circles were shaken to the core. The crisis of the state was resolved through the rise of afrikaner nationalism which despite its populist rhetoric functioned on behalf of capital to suppress the threat posed by the working class movement. The HNP victory was able to secure the conditions of capital accumulation and the interests of the entire capitalist class primarily through savage repression of working class organisations, which finally seemed to break the back of popular resistance in the early 1960s.

The language of this summary account is taken directly from two major attempts to theorise the class struggles of this period; those of Dan O'Meara and Saul and Gelb (3). It is a language of superlatives; vast and irreversible growth of the urban black proletariat, mushrooming of trade union organisation, dramatic escalation of working class militancy, popular resistance against racial capitalist exploitation, profound crisis of the state, loss of political control and ideological hegemony, the capitalist resolution of the crisis through the rise of apartheid and the repression of black opposition.

Within its own terms, however, this analysis poses a question which it does not resolve and only barely addresses. If the numbers, organisation and militancy of black workers were growing apace in the 1940s, why could they not carve out a more democratic future for South Africa? why could they not compel the ruling classes to recognise their movement and come to terms

with their demands? why did they fail to push the rulers of South Africa at least into some form of accomodation, as the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie favoured, or at most out of political power altogether? Was it inevitable that their heroic resistance should have ended in defeat or that the crisis of the state should have been resolved in the interests of capital and at the expense of the mass of the working class? To answer this question, we shall have to review the major premises of the conventional left wisdom.

First, we should not exaggerate the growth of the urban and industrial black proletariat in the 1940s. It developed rapidly but only from a very small base. The latter half of the 1930s and the 1940s represented the beginning of the era of modern industry in South Africa and the beginning of the making of the modern industrial working class. The black industrial working class was in its infancy. It did not step onto the stage of South African history, as it were, ready matured. The importance of this point is that what we call the 'social weight' of the black working class, that is, its power to effect historic change in society, was far more limited in the 1940s than is suggested in a literature which emphasises its vast and irreversible growth. This was not a question in the first instance of the political consciousness of the black working class but rather of its social being.

Second, trade union organisation grew rapidly among black workers in this period but from a minimal base. Earlier attempts at black trade union

organisation had been all but wiped out in the Depression years. Major weaknesses and divisions were visible in the trade union movement as early as 1943-44 and it suffered decisive reversals in the miners' and steelworkers' strikes of 1946. There was a growth of industrial action during the war but most strikes were economic rather than political in character, for higher wages rather than against the 'racial capitalist' system. The major wave of industrial strikes by urban black workers peaked by 1943 and the strikes of migrant workers in mining, power and steel, generally followed rather than integrated with those of urban workers. By the end of 1946, two years before the rise of the HNP, trade union organisation and industrial action virtually ground to a halt. Although there were some militant unions in the 1940s, most took a cautious attitude toward industrial action particularly between the years 1941 and 1945. Their policy was as far as possible to avoid all forms of illegal action, with the result that many of the strikes which black workers undertook did not have the support of the unions or only had reluctant support. Some were actively opposed by the unions.

Third, black politics were radicalised in the 1940s but the political leadership of the black movement also took a cautious attitude toward worker militancy. Its support for the war effort, its desire not to disrupt war production, its search for an alliance with the liberal middle classes and its belief that self-restraint from below would be rewarded with concessions from above were among the factors which distanced the political leadership from industrial action and other forms of working class protest. After the war, as the labour movement declined, this political leadership

fragmented and was rendered increasingly vulnerable. A significant left opposition came into being in 1943-44, with the formation of the ANC Youth League, the Non-European Unity Movement and a trotskyist-led left opposition in the trade unions. They shared in common a rejection of the liberal-democratic paradigm within which the leadership of the black movement operated, characterising its moderate constitutionalism as self-humbling and destined to failure. Apart from this common negative starting point, however, the left opposition was deeply fragmented from the start, offering conflicting diagnoses of the crisis of political leadership and conflicting remedies for the future. Only a small section of the left opposition looked to the re-construction of the black labour movement, while the majority looked rather to the formation in its place of a new social movement under the banner of one or other form of black nationalism.

Lastly, while the ruling class was divided between its liberal and afrikaner nationalist wings, it acted decisively in one respect: to suppress worker militancy and to contain worker organisation within narrowly defined limits of legality. In this regard they were brutally effective, securing decisive successes in 1946 over the black labour movement. The image of an escalating threat posed by black workers to capital omits the savage defeats they suffered prior to the emergence of apartheid and the disintegration of the labour movement which followed them. It was not in the first place because of apartheid that the resistance of black workers was defeated; rather it was because of the defeat of their resistance that apartheid was able to resolve the crisis of segregationism in its own racist and dictatorial fashion.

Black trade unionism

We can see this process at work most vividly in the trajectory of the black unions. In the mid-1930s trade unionism was not new for black industrial workers but it had to be re-constructed almost from scratch. In the latter half of the 1920s a number of small industrial unions were organised in areas like laundry, baking, clothing and municipal work mainly at the initiative of Communist Party activists like T W Thibedi and Bennie Weinbren. In 1928 most of these unions were combined by the Communist Party into the Federation of Non-European Trade Unions. In 1928 and 1929 a number of new unions (including Dairy Workers, Motor Drivers, Food and Drink Workers, Cotton and Rope Workers, Soap and Chemical Workers) joined the Federation, which at its peak organised some ten to fifteen thousand black workers. These unions organised a number of successful strikes between 1927 and 1929 primarily on issues of victimisation and employers' evasion of Wage Determinations. (4)

After 1929, however, SAFNETU rapidly disintegrated. Its young organisation was beaten by the mix of economic recession and severe political repression. As an affiliate of the Red International of Labour Unions (the Profintern), SAFNETU's survival was not helped by the so-called 'Native Republic' policy adopted by the Communist Party of South Africa in the so-called Third Period of the Comintern. The effect of this policy was first to close the gates to white workers, second to impose adventurist tactics

on the trade union leadership (with recurring calls for militancy and general strikes at a time when black workers were weak), and most importantly the purging from the CPSA of most of its serious trade unionists in what one member aptly called 'an orgy of self-destruction' (5). Thibedi, Weinbren, Solly Sachs and Gana Makabeni, the secretary of the Native Clothing Workers Union, were among those expelled. Only two of the Federation's unions survived at all, having broken with the Party. They were the Native Laundry Workers and the Native Clothing Workers, both of which were to play important roles in the revival of black unionism in the latter half of the 1930s.

There were other forms of black trade unionism in the 1920s. After the First World War two separate unions were established to organise black workers: the Industrial Workers of Africa (IWA), which played a role in the organisation of municipal and mining workers but soon collapsed (not least because it was infested with government spies) (6), and the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union which started its life organising dockers (7). In the latter half of the 1920s the ICU went on to become the emblem of a potent mass movement of rural labourers and was said to number between 100,000 and 150,000 members at its peak. In 1930 it too rapidly disintegrated into demoralised and weak factions. The defeat of both the african mineworkers' strike in 1920 and then the white mineworkers' strike in 1922 dealt a very heavy blow to working class organisation on the mines, as did the successful incorporation of white mine labour in the years that followed (8). An attempt was made by Thibedi to establish a black

mineworkers' union at the end of the 1920s but little is known about what became of it.

The key point is this, Black workers developed some experience of trade unionism in the 1920s but prior to the mid-1930s all attempts to establish a stable form of trade union organisation among black workers had failed. This is the context in which we should see the rise of the black labour movement in the latter half of the 1930s and then during the war years of the 1940s. In 1935/36 major initiatives to organise black unions were taken by political activists entering the world of black labour, as it were, from without. Trotskyist militants and their sympathisers, men like Max Gordon, Dan Koza and D. Gosani, in receipt of material and moral support from progressive liberals in the Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), were the first to take the initiative on the Rand. They re-vitalised the Laundry Workers Union, one of the two black unions to survive the Depression, and formed a number of new unions, notably among commercial and distributive, baking, printing, dairy and chemical workers. By 1939 they were reported to have organised seven unions with a combined membership of 15,700, and formed the Joint Committee of African Trade Unions with Gordon as secretary. Before its dissolution in 1940, the Joint Committee was reported to have built up an organisation of some 25,000 workers in 21 unions on the Rand, constituting nearly 30% of the african industrial labour force and 90% of all organised african workers on the Rand (9). After the internment of Max Gordon for anti-war activities in May 1940 and his attempt from gaol to have Lynn Saffery, the liberal secretary of the SAIRR, appointed as General Secretary of the Joint Committee, african impatience with what was

seen as white supervision led to the splitting of the Joint Committee and to Dan Koza's taking over control of the most powerful of its progeny, the African Commercial and Distributive Workers Union (ACDWU).

A smaller body of african trade unions under the title of the Co-ordinating Committee was grouped under the leadership of the former Communist, Gana Makabeni, and recruited a membership estimated at somewhere between 2672 and 4000 members. Makabeni revived the second of the two unions that survived the depression, the Native Clothing Workers Union, receiving support from a progressive registered union, the Garment Workers, which was organised by another ex-Communist, Solly Sachs (10). Although Makabeni like Sachs had been expelled from the CPSA at the turn of the decade, he received support in the Communist Party press. Some Communist Party members, like Ray Alexander (Simons), were active in the formation of trade unions among coloured and african workers in the Cape, especially through the formation in 1936 of the Non-European Railway and Harbour Workers Union, but Communists do not appear to have played a direct role in the trade union organisation of black workers in the industrial and mining heartlands of the Rand before the war.

In the course of the war, the black trade union movement expanded, as did Communist Party involvement in trade unions. In 1941 a trade union centre was built in the Transvaal through the formation of the Council of Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU). By 1945 it is estimated that around 40% of africans employed in commerce and private industry were unionised, as CNETU

claimed a national membership of 158,000 in 119 unions (11). In 1941 the African Mineworkers Union (AMWU) was formed and claimed a membership of 25,000 by 1944. In addition, there were at least 11 registered unions in the Trades and Labour Council which organised african workers and many organised indian and coloured workers (12). In short there was an impressive record of growth within the black trade union movement.

Between 1942 and 1945 there was also a substantial number of strikes recorded among industrial and commercial workers; in the laundry, steel, dairy, coal, milling, timber, distributive and commercial, power, municipal and other sectors of employment. The figures below offer a rough and ready guide to the aggregate picture (13):

Year	No. of strikes	No. of whites (000)	No. of blacks (000)	Man days lost (000)
1940	24	1,2	0,7	6,5
1941	35	0,7	4,8	23,2
1942	58	1,3	12,8	49,5
1943	52	1,8	7,4	47,4
1944	52	0,2	12,0	62,7
1945	63	1,5	14,7	91,1

A large strike wave of industrial workers took place between September 1942 and February 1943, involving at least 8000 african workers in many Witwatersrand industries and 4000 asian workers in Natal (14). After a lull during the rest of 1943, strike action again gathered momentum, deriving

this time mainly from migrant workers in the power stations and mines. In the latter years of the war these workers repeatedly revolted against threatening starvation and their slave-like existence, the climax coming in August 1946 with a strike of over 70,000 African mineworkers and 6000 iron and steel workers (15). Most of these strike were over wages but many other work-related issues were taken up; trade union recognition, victimisation, accidents, assaults, poor and inadequate food and the contract labour system.

In the overcrowded and impoverished townships africans also fought community-based battles over a range of social issues. There was the riot against police raids in Vereeniging in 1937, when black residents fought back against the persistent brutality meted out to them by the police in their search for pass offenders and illicit liquor producers. There were bus boycotts against rising fares, notably in Alexandra where in 1942, 1943 and 1944 black workers walked in thousands the long journey from the township to work and back again rather than pay an additional penny on the fares (16). There were squatter movements against the housing shortages, notably in Orlando between 1944 and 1946 when the Sofasonke movement ('we shall die') under the leadership of the 'shanty chief' Mpanza took over land and built their own shanty towns and squatter camps. Mpanza became known as 'the slicer' for his ability to slice off more land for the homeless (17).

There were political strikes in the urban communities with at least three recorded in 1944. In Heidelberg, there was a protest demonstration organised by women, sparked by the arrest of an activist in the local Anti-Pass Committee. None of the people in the location went to work, as they expressed their grievances against their lack of representation on local authorities and the 'permit system' (they were a form of influx control in which people lodging in other people's houses were required to have a lodger's permit). Later there was a second strike involving all four thousand residents, apparently related to the conviction of 31 black women. At Elsberg 200 women went on strike in protest against the authority's refusal to allow men to live with their wives. In Brakpan, a community-wide strike was triggered by the victimisation of David Bopape, a leading figure in the Anti-Pass Campaign. The issues raised included the victimisation of political activists, the separation of families, housing shortages, inadequate public transport and lack of representation on local authorities (18). We see here between the years 1936 and 1946 an apparent flowering of trade union organisation, industrial militancy and community activism. The movement was never large by contemporary standards, but the question remains as to what happened to it after 1946. That year was to prove a decisive turning point.

In 1946 the strike of 60-70,000 african mineworkers was beaten and more importantly the union which had formally organised it, the African Mineworkers' Union, was crushed. By 1950 the union only had 700 paid up members. In the same year the strike of 6000 iron and steel workers was also beaten and heralded the disintegration of the union from a peak of

35,000 during the war to 98 members in 1948 (19). CNETU was unable to provide substantial support either to the mineworkers or the steelworkers. It was itself internally divided and organisationally weak, having suffered a major major division in 1944-5 with the formation of the militant Progressive Trade Union Group as a left opposition within its ranks under the leadership of Dan Koza (20). In 1947 it suffered a second split when 22 affiliates, some linked to Gana Makabeni and others to Dan Koza, disaffiliated from CNETU citing disillusionment with its Communist Party leadership. The number of black workers organised into trade unions declined sharply after 1946. By 1950 there were 52 black unions representing only 34,500 workers, to which can be added 3700 black members of mixed unions; less than a quarter of the 1945 figures (21). After 1946 CNETU took no major initiatives. Looking back in 1951, the Botha Commission into industrial legislation commented on the 'severe setback' suffered by the black trade union movement after the war, indicating that 66 trade unions had become defunct since that time (22). Black strike action fell sharply after 1946, dropping from a high of over 75,000 strikers in 1946 to little over 2000 in 1947 and under 1500 in 1948.

The historical evidence suggests that profound problems afflicted the black trade unions prior to the defeats of 1946. The 1946 strike figures seem to have been comprised entirely of the 70,000 miners and 6000 iron and steel workers who went on strike that year, so that apart from these two cases strike action appears already to have ground to a halt. The miners' strike of 1946 represented the last gasp rather than the high point of the war-time strike wave. An editorial in *Revolutionary Communist*, the theoretical

journal of the trotskyist Workers International League (WIL), commented in August of 1945 that the wartime development of black trade unionism attracted 100,000 workers but that:

It was a war product - quickly made and of inferior standard. The movement faced all the weaknesses of an economic struggle that could find no real economic improvements (despite relative wage increases). Its hands were tied by lack of status, unimaginative leadership and governmental oppression. Only those unions which displayed vigour in their struggle ... or those that live on the traditions of past exploits, have maintained their membership. On the other hand, the splits and collapse of nearly half these unions - 17 of the Rand itself - during the last six months has been catastrophic (23).

This disparaging comment needs to be treated with caution, since it was part of an internal polemic within the trotskyist movement articulated by a faction which wished to withdraw from trade union work. Its comment, however, about the weakness of the unions prior to 1946 was confirmed by other observers. In March 1945, for instance, it was reported to the Witwatersrand Local Committee of the Trades and Labour Council that 'the position of African unions was comparatively serious in that there was a sharp decline in their organisational strength' (24). Whether the turning of the tide of black trade unionism is dated in 1946 or earlier, the historical evidence is clear about one thing. Far from apartheid bringing about the defeat of the black labour movement, it was the defeat of the black labour movement which preceeded the rise of apartheid. The question we turn to is how and why this happened?

The social weight of the black working class

To answer this question we should look to two constraining factors; the social forces at the disposal of the labour movement and the nature of the ruling class response. We shall start with the question of forces from below. Our main argument is that the social weight of the black working class was far less developed in the 1940s than is usually represented in the literature and that the inability of the black working class to win democratic change in this period derived in the first instance from its lack of social weight. The concept of the 'social weight' of the working class is crucial to understanding what it could or could not achieve in a given period, but it is too often subsumed in the literature to the study of class consciousness.

Statistics on the growth of the black working class in the 1940s are impressive, but they give a misleading picture if isolated from their low starting point. Thus between 1933 and 1946 the figures reveal rapid industrialisation. Between 1933 and 1939 the national income of South Africa rose by 67% and the contribution of secondary industry rose by 118%. In the war years between 1939 and 1946 national income rose by 78% and the contribution of manufacture by over 100%. Taking the period 1933 to 1946 as a whole, national income rose almost 200% and the contribution of secondary industry by 338%. The value of industrial output shot up from £95 million in 1933-34 to £450 million in 1946-47 and by 1946 industry had comfortably

overtaken mining and agriculture as the biggest sector in money terms in the South African economy (25).

The key to industrial growth lay in the heavy metal and engineering industry. It was transformed from a servicing adjunct to the mines and a minor role even in the small world of manufacture into the driving force of industrial expansion. By 1937 one third of all South African steel consumption was locally produced. The money value of South African metal and engineering products grew from £9 million in 1934 to £22.2 million in 1939 and then to £53.8 million in 1945-46. The share of the metal industry in manufacturing output as a whole rose from 19.5% in 1933-34 to over 28% in 1946-47 (26). The sectoral shift from light to heavy industry was illustrated by the declining share of the food, drink and tobacco industry from over 29% of manufacturing output in 1934 to under 20% in 1946-47. By the eve of World War 2 the Rand, where most heavy industry was concentrated, had achieved an unprecedented national significance with over 40% of the nation's industrial activity. These developments have led the economic historian, Bill Freund, to declare that South Africa had found its Ruhr (27).

As industry developed in the 1930s and '40s, so too did the industrial wing of the black working class. The total industrial workforce expanded from about 132,000 in 1932 to 283,000 in 1939 and 422,000 in 1946. The african industrial work force almost tripled from about 85,000 in 1934 to over 250,000 in 1946. Black workers became an increasingly important part of the

industrial labour force as a whole. The proportion of blacks to whites in the manufacturing sector increased from 41% in 1935 to 47% in 1940 and 52% in 1945, the crossing of what Freund has termed an historic barrier (28). The proportion of the total black labour force in manufacturing went steadily up: in 1935 57% were in agriculture, 33% in mining and 10% in manufacture; by 1945 these percentages stood at 47% in agriculture, 31% in mining and 17% in manufacturing (29). Overall employment in the basic metal industries went up from about 11,900 workers in 1933 to 33,878 in 1939 and then to 61,834 in 1946. By 1944 65,000 black workers were employed in the metal and engineering industry, an increase of over 50% in relation to the pre-war total.

Alongside the growth of modern industry came the growth of towns. According to the Native Laws Commission of 1948, the number of urbanised white people went up from 1,310,000 in 1936 to 1,720,000 in 1946 or from 65% to 73% of the total white population. The number of urbanised black people went up from 1,141,642 in 1936 to 1,794,212 in 1946 or from 17% to 23% of the total black population (30). Between 1935 and 1946 the number of urban black women, an important marker of permanent urbanisation, almost doubled from 350,000 to 650,000 (31).

The countryside too was marked by great changes as agriculture was capitalised and the majority of black people on the land were proletarianised, a fact which distinguished the class structure of South Africa from the peasant economies of African colonies to the north. The

independent african peasantry was badly hit by the collapse of agricultural prices during the Depression and then by the mechanisation of farming production during the war. On so-called 'white land' or land owned by whites and worked by blacks, the 1930s and 1940s saw a marked capitalisation of agriculture and corresponding decline of independent african production. By the end of the 1940s 87% of farming land was taken up by large commercial farms of over 1000 morgen each. The number of tractors used in agriculture went up from around 6000 in 1937 to 48,000 in 1950, and capital invested in agricultural machinery rose from £30 million in 1939 to £150 million in 1952. In the most advanced farming areas in the Cape, independent black farming was becoming virtually extinct, though in the more backward areas it survived in significant numbers. (32)

Numerous government commissions pointed to the rapid decline of agricultural production in the reserves and the corresponding dependency of reservists on migrant labour. As early as 1932, the Native Economic Commission commented that 'throughout the reserves... the carrying capacity of the soil for both human beings and animals is definitely on the downgrade' and warned that unless remedial measures were taken 'the creation of desert conditions' would ensue (33). The 1938 Report of the Native Affairs Commission noted that the reserves were generally 'congested, denuded, eroded and... in a deplorable condition' (34). The Report of the Social and Economic Planning Council of 1946 commented on 'the incapacity of the Native Reserves to provide even the minimum subsistence requirements under present conditions' (35). The Native Laws Commission of 1946-48 described the extent of soil erosion as 'nothing less

than terrifying' (36). It was estimated that by the end of the war some 85% of the reservists' income came from wages and that at any one time some 45% of african men and 15% of african women were away from the reserves.

Official figures show a decline of the african peasantry between 1936 and 1946 from almost 2.5 million or over 50% of the economically active population to just over 832,000 or 17.5% (37). This decline was exaggerated by changes in the way in which african women were classified (the earlier figures were based on a policy of classifying all african women in the reserves as peasants while the later figures were based on the self-definition of african women), but the decline of male peasants from 814,000 or 34% of the economically male active population in 1936 to 526,000 or 21% in 1946 may be taken as a better indicator of the fate befalling the african peasantry in this period. Since access to the new urban middle classes was barred to all but a few black people, drawn mainly from the children of the more prosperous peasantry, we may speak of a rapid process of black proletarianisation, so that by the 1940s the great majority of africans were dependent on the sale of labour power for wages in kind or money.

Enough of these figures lest they blind us. They point to great changes in South African capitalism as three key markers of modern capitalism - proletarianisation, urbanisation and industrialisation - were laid. What is missing from these statistics, however, is an appreciation that the period under review represented only the beginnings of modern industry in

South Africa and the genesis of the black industrial proletariat. Read in their context the figures reveal that, as an independent force in its own right, the social weight of the black working class was insubstantial.

First, we should not exaggerate the extent of proletarianisation among black people. The survival of over three quarters of a million african peasants was testimony not only to their extraordinary endurance but also to the continued relevance of the 'peasant question' to the democratic struggle. Nor should we exaggerate the extent of urbanisation. In the 1940s South Africa remained a overwhelmingly rural society, with the great majority of black people living and labouring on the land. They were scattered over vast areas under conditions of terrible servility and backwardness. At the same time, the huge black population in the reserves continued to expand and over-crowding was a perpetual refrain of all reports on the reserves. By far the major part of the black proletariat still had one or both feet planted on the land, under conditions which were extremely unfavourable to working class organisation.

The greatest concentrations of black wage labour were among the roughly 320,000 black migrants contracted to the mines. Here the conditions of working class organisation were far more favourable than in agriculture, but obstacles were posed by the fact that black miners were hived off from the wider society as a kind of enclave labour force for the duration of their contracts, subjected to the draconian discipline of Masters and Servants legislation and the compound system, unfree to move job or place.

They were locked by law in unskilled labour and supervised by a large stratum of white skilled workers well incorporated into the structures of racial management. Many miners were foreign workers from outside the borders of the country and the proportion of foreign migrants increased as industry attracted South African blacks. Turnover of labour was high, due both to the migrant labour system and to appalling conditions of work. (38)

In the towns large numbers of black workers, male and female, were scattered over white households, employed unproductively as domestic workers with little bargaining power. In 1941 there were estimated to be around 42,000 black domestic workers in Johannesburg and servants still outnumbered factory workers among blacks on the Witwatersrand as a whole (39). Most black women were virtually excluded from manufacture, the number of black female industrial workers rising from a mere 921 in 1936 to only 3314 in 1946. Most were employed or self-employed in the so-called hidden sector of the economy as beer-brewers, shabeen-keepers, washerwomen, hawkers, prostitutes and the like with limited capacity for labour organisation.

What is most striking about the black industrial workforce itself in this period is how limited its numbers were; whether in relation to the black population as a whole or the millions of black workers on the land or to the size of industrial labour forces in the more advanced industrialised countries. It peaked at around only a quarter of a million workers out of a total of around five million economically active black people. Manufacture

did not of course start from scratch in 1934, small concerns having existed since before the First World War, yet the small base from which industrial growth took off may be revealed by the fact that between 1924 and 1933 industrial output rose very slowly from £65 million in 1924-25 to £77 million in 1932-33. These figures are skewed by the impact of the Depression on manufacture between 1929 and 1933 but they indicate how far industrialisation was a child of the post-Depression era. Many of the histories of South African industrialisation have been too ready to accept the industrialists' own assessments of their economic importance. (40)

The concentration of labour in manufacture was limited; in the garment industry, for instance, there was only a handful of factories with more than 100 employees and the great majority had more like five to ten workers. Where there were larger concentrations of black labour, particularly in the docks, railroad and metal, black workers were as far as possible hived off in compounds, drawn from rurally-based migrants and employed as contract workers under Masters and Servants discipline. Turnover of labour in industry was high due to the casualness of most black unskilled employment; in metal, for instance, black labour turnover was said to be over 100% a year (41). Most industries had little mechanisation or capital investment; in the building industry there were barely any cranes; in the garment industry tools comprised the Singer sewing machine and scissors. Even in the steel and engineering industry, mass production and the appearance of the semi-skilled machine operator was in its infancy.

Lastly, the power of black workers was limited by a racial division of labour in industry which, while being less acute than in mining, still reserved most skilled jobs for white workers. Under other circumstances, this aristocracy might have been expected to give a lead to the working class as a whole, as was often the case among skilled metal workers in Europe. This role was not entirely absent in South Africa, but the colonial heritage of racism meant that skilled metal workers, though to a lesser extent than in mining, were alienated from the black workers who laboured under them and therefore less able or willing to transfer their trade union skills and solidarities.

The conditions in which black workers lived in town were better than in the countryside but nonetheless reminiscent of the condition of the working class described by Engels in the early years of the industrial revolution in England. The towns were grossly overcrowded and impoverished; on the Witwatersrand only 18% of the total black population were known to be housed and 31% were known not to be housed. Even though black industrial wages were said to have risen substantially during the war, poverty wages led to severe malnutrition as many black workers kept alive but only just. According to one study of Johannesburg a very small proportion of black workers received a wage sufficient to support a family, even at a 'minimal scale of urban life'. A sample of urban black families in Johannesburg in 1940 revealed that 86.8% fell below the poverty datum line and a social survey in Cape Town revealed that 55% of coloured workers fell below this line (42). Many urban black workers were forced into single sex compounds and those not confined to compounds were often little better off; many were

illegally resident and faced deportation if caught and many were not permitted to live with their families. Since the income earned by women in the 'hidden' economy was essential to survival, legal prohibitions on their entry into the towns, co-habitation and beer-brewing were as severe in their economic effects as in the personal tragedies they created for black families. The struggle for survival in such harsh and insecure conditions of existence made the self-organisation of urban workers no easy road.

A focus on the proletarianisation, industrialisation and urbanisation of black people in the 1940s has tended to exaggerate the potential and conceal the weaknesses of the black working class as a whole in this period. The impressive percentage increases which we have recorded hide the very small base from which they started. The lack of numbers, concentration and bargaining power of the black industrial proletariat were witness to the fact that, just as the industrial revolution was in its infancy, so too was the industrial working class it spawned. These economic factors imposed definite constraints, independent of consciousness, on what black workers could achieve in the 1940s as a political force in their own right. They begin to explain why, as in the 1920s, so too in the 1940s another wave of black working class organisation could not sustain itself.

The state response

From above, the main external reason for the decline of black trade unions lay in the growth of state repression and the corresponding political collapse of the liberal wing of the ruling class. Until 1942 - 43 the rise of black unions was facilitated by a period of relative liberalisation as one section of the bourgeoisie, responding to the development of modern industry, sought a new kind of accommodation to the expanding black proletariat. What was called 'liberalism' was not a homogeneous entity but rather a spectrum of political thought ranging from Smuts on the extreme right to Hofmeyr in the centre and Marquard and Saffery on the left; but what united the liberal bourgeoisie was the view that the racial political super-structure of South Africa posed obstacles to the growth of modern industry and needed some degree of relaxation (43). Taken as a whole the reform programme may be summed up as follows:

- 1) the relaxation of influx controls and the pass laws in order to create a more stabilised workforce and a reserve army of labour among black workers in the urban areas, to reduce the social costs consequent upon the mass arrest of africans for pass law offences and to extend exemptions for middle class africans;

- 2) the relaxation of job reservation based on colour in order to create open competition for jobs, meet expanding requirements

for skilled and semi-skilled labour and cheapen overall labour costs;

3) the extension of black representation through legally recognised unions and political bodies in order to institutionalise industrial relations and political protest under a legal umbrella;

4) the extension of property rights to black people in their 'own' areas in order to build a black middle class as a buffer between white society and black workers;

5) the encouragement of higher wages for black workers in order to extend the black consumer market, decrease state expenditure on welfare and offset labour unrest.

The weaknesses of South African liberalism have been well rehearsed in the literature (44). Many of its protagonists embraced the racial ideas of segregationism, too often believing that a change in the name of a thing - from race to culture, from segregation to trust, from prejudice to pluralism - changed the nature of the thing itself. The continuities between liberalism and apartheid were recognised by Smuts when he declared that 'there is a great deal about apartheid which is common to all parties in this country'. Liberalism was a pre-eminently bourgeois form of politics whose commitment to liberty was tempered by the need to protect property, its greatest fear being that moderate reform from above might unleash a tidal wave of protest from below. The support

which it received from industry was limited by the high level of integration between industry and the two sectors of capital which relied on unfree black labour, mining and agriculture. It was subject to the pressures of white labour leaders suspicious that behind the rhetoric of progressive capital lay a design to replace white workers with cheaper and less organised black labour. It lacked an independent political base, appended instead to a bourgeois segregationist party - the United Party of Smuts - whose own history was imbricated in both racialism and the most illiberal responses to all forms of labour organisation. Most important of all, many liberal politicians, administrators and businessmen shared the generalised racialism of white society.

These factors combined to make liberalism a compromised and wavering force in the 1940s. Nonetheless it would be a great mistake to see liberalism simply as a subterfuge for segregationism or as a blood-brother to the afrikaner nationalism to come. The liberal strategy offered to black workers the prospect of a more favourable terrain of struggle than the apartheid alternative, revealing a willingness on the part of sections of the ruling class to accommodate to black labour. As industrialisation gathered pace, there were practical as well as rhetorical signs of liberal influence at work within the state. The space which reform opened up played a crucial role in the building of the young black labour movement.

Thus the Wage Boards established under the Department of Labour provided a legal framework through which trade unions could apply for 'wage determinations' for their members. Set up in 1925 as part of the Pact government's civilized labour policy to raise the wages of white workers to a 'civilized level', wage boards had always been formally available to workers of all races, but the exclusion from its provisions of agricultural, domestic and mineworkers excluded in practice the vast majority of black workers. As black workers entered industry, however, this legal machinery was re-structured to cater for their wage issues and was used to good effect by black unions to secure wage increases for their members (45).

In 1937 the Industrial Conciliation Act was amended, partly to tighten up on the exclusion of africans from state-recognised trade unions but also to allow for the extension of Industrial Council agreements to african workers. The same year the Department of Labour reported its 'increasing appreciation of the necessity of improving the wages and other conditions of employment of unskilled workers', given that 'the labour requirements of our ever-growing manufacturing industries necessitated the establishment of a more settled labour supply'. It was attentive to the fact that 'the native unskilled worker, after a period of quiescence following the native trade union movement of a few years ago, is again organising his forces' (46). The Secretary of Labour, Ivan Walker, wrote in 1937 that consideration would have to be given to some kind of state recognition: 'unless these organisations are subject to supervision similar to that applicable to registered unions, there is an

ever-present danger of the native worker being exploited for ... subversive ends'. The Secretary of Native Affairs, D L Smit, wrote in 1939 that consideration would have to be given to some kind of state recognition of black unions so as to bring them under the control and supervision of the department (47).

The 1939-40 Native Affairs Commission accepted this recommendation, concluding that 'the existence of a number of Native trade unions demands some form of recognition. The Commission has... advised that this should be given... What is necessary is that some official channel be established through which Native trade unions can bring into official organization any grievances they are labouring under and, if well founded, have them remedied', rather than 'leave them to adopt the dangerous advice of some unbalanced, semi-educated Native or the promptings of disreputable Europeans who batten on Native ignorance and cupidity' (48). In 1939 and again in 1942 substantial wage increases for large bodies of workers were agreed by the Department of Labour in the form of Wage Determinations.

In 1941 the Minister of Justice sent a circular to the police, following protests from the Institute of Race Relations in the aftermath of the coalworkers' strike, instructing them neither to arrest nor prosecute africans on strike until the matter had been reported to the Departments of Labour and of Native Affairs and worker representatives were given the opportunity of settling the dispute (49). In 1942 Smuts, as ever

playing to his audience, was reported in a speech to the Institute of Race Relations to have repudiated segregationism in favour of 'trusteeship'. 'Segregation has fallen on evil days', he said and asked 'how can it be otherwise? The whole trend both in this country and the African continent has been in the opposite direction' (50). The same year the Smit Committee recommended the abolition of the pass laws, the recognition of african trade unions under the Industrial Conciliation Act and the abolition of the economic colour bar (51). In an interview with Ballinger, both the Departmental Secretaries for Labour and Native Affairs declared their own conviction of the need for the recognition of black unions (52). The Labour Party Minister of Labour, Madeley, opened the first conference of the Council of Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU), indicating that there was a possibility of government registration being opened up to black unions. His speech was reported favourably in the *Guardian*, a paper connected with the Communist Party, under the headline 'Thank you Mr Madley!', the article claiming tht Madeley had persuaded the government to accept the recognition of black trade unions (53).

Early in 1942 the Minister for Native Affairs called for permissive legislation to allow for 'native representation' on municipal councils and for the reform of the pass laws. Arguing that 'nothing was so conducive to ... disturbing race relations as the Pass Laws' and calling it 'an appalling indictment' that between 1939 and 1941 297,695 arrests had been made under the Pass Laws, he declared that he would issue instructions 'that no native should be arrested unless there was

reasonable ground for suspecting that he had committed an offence' (54). He deplored the vast numbers of africans arrested and convicted under the pass laws and the fact that fives times that number were accosted by the police. The case reveals the presence of a liberal discourse in the highest offices of state but equally perhaps the profoundly oppressive reality of working class life.

The government policy can be seen as designed to co-opt one section of the black working class, urban workers, at the expense of the majority of migrant and agricultural workers. Both these latter groups were excluded from the cost of living allowances and from Wage Board determinations received by white workers and by black workers in commerce and industry. Both were excluded from any prospect of state recognition of their rights as organised workers. The co-optive policy was modelled on a weak version of the corporatist approach taken toward white, coloured and indian workers. It was possible because of the relatively small numbers of african workers involved and it appeared necessary to stabilise industrial relations and pre-empt organised resistance.

The government's policy was, however, flawed in its own terms. The incorporation of white workers, was itself working unevenly in this period and the expectation that it would work in the same way for urban black workers was unfounded, not least because whites had the vote and blacks did not. The separation of black urban from migrant workers was

much harder to secure in practice than to state in theory, since many industrial and commercial workers were themselves migrants. Finally, far from being lulled into passivity by concessions from above, many industrial and commercial workers were motivated to exploit for their own purposes the space made available to them by reform. As is often the case, the liberalisation of a labour-repressive regime acted as a spur to working class resistance (55).

The process may be illustrated by the most important of the Wage Board determinations into unskilled labour in Witwatersrand and Pretoria which white liberals had been requesting since 1936 (56). Commencing in mid-1941, this investigation covered 47,000 workers in 34 industries and ended in Wage Determination 105 which fixed a minimum wage of 25/- a week, rising to 27/- over two years, to come into force on the 30 November 1942. This wage was almost double the average black wage on the gold mines but it fell well below the wage of 37/6 a week which the Smit Report at the end of 1942 calculated as the poverty datum line for the average urban family.

Contrary to government plans, this wage determination was a major factor in the provocation of the strike wave of December 1942. The lowness of the poverty wages fixed by the Wage Board, which for some better paid workers represented no increase, failed to satisfy the workers. Increases for certain groups, notably dairy and municipal workers, were revoked; the former because of the danger that they might also apply to

farmworkers in the dairy industry and the latter because the municipal authorities successfully argued that they could not bear the cost involved. This naturally led to considerable frustration. Many groups of impoverished migrant workers, like those in mining, timber, power and water, were particularly incensed by their exclusion from the wage determination, while other unskilled migrants in industry and commerce were included (57).

The policy of accommodation was destined to be explosive under the circumstances, with the bargaining power of black workers increased by war-time conditions and high demand for labour. Unemployment was relatively low, many white workers were away on military service, many black workers were acquiring industrial skills which were needed by the employers. During the dairy strike, for instance, *Die Transvaler* commented that 'it will be anything but easy to replace the milkboys' since 'a native who does not know the town needs about three weeks to learn his round' (58). Many workers were prepared for aggressive and sometimes violent picketing, while the need for black support for the war effort made the government cautious about the use of force. The main exception to this policy, heralding what was soon to become the more normal state response, was during the municipal workers' protests in December 1942 in Pretoria when sixteen black workers were shot dead by troops. This was followed by a commission of inquiry which condemned the shootings and recommended compensation to the families of the victims. Most of the strikes were strictly economic and of short duration, followed by unions negotiating on their members' behalf. They resulted

in several groups of workers - including those in dairy, municipal, clay, timber and water - winning significant wage increases.

The shootings in December 1942 were the first marker of a definite turn in state policy from a policy of reform to one of repression of the black working class. The new climate was symbolised by the extension of War Measure 9, which prohibited strikes in essential industries, to War Measure 145, which made all strikes by black workers illegal in all circumstances, inflicted heavy penalties of three years imprisonment and/or £50 fine and introduced compulsory arbitration. The measures designed to recognise black unions were dropped, since in the words of a government commission, 'the natives were no longer prepared to accept anything short of full statutory recognition under the Industrial Conciliation Act'(59). Henceforth the government and employers cracked down with ever greater force against industrial action by black workers. They used armed soldiers and police against iron and steel workers in 1942, municipal workers in 1943 and power workers in 1944. The state attempted to impose a general wage freeze and prosecuted hundreds of black strikers every year. The Wage Board continued to function but apart from one or two exceptions agreed to no more large increases. The Board used every device to avoid arriving at wage determinations, citing for example the failure of employers and unions to agree on what wages they wanted the Board to fix. In 1945 War Measure 1425 effectively blocked the legal organisation of black mineworkers and the Chamber of Mines refused to offer any hint of recognition of the African

Mineworkers' Union. In 1946 the miners' strike was violently suppressed at the cost of 12 workers killed and 1200 injured.

State policy was not free of contradictions between its residual liberalism and its iron fist. This was evident in the 1948 Fagan Commission which refused to recommend the abolition of all discriminatory laws or the removal of restrictions on the movements of africans, arguing that 'the Natives are by no means a homogeneous group. Side by side with the settled Natives, there are very many who are simply migrants. Among these are numbers of raw kraal natives who are strangers to European morals and customs'. On the other hand it concluded that the permanent settlement of africans had to be 'recognised'. Its boldest recommendation was that the law ought to 'make it possible for some responsibility in connection with certain administrative matters and in the maintenance of law and order in native villages within the jurisdiction of a European urban authority to be delegated to the Natives themselves' (60).

The same ambivalences were present in regard to trade union recognition. It was not until 1947 that the Smuts government finally published a bill proposing the recognition of african unions. It excluded workers in the mines, domestic labour, farm labour and state employment (including the nationalised industries). It prohibited any unregistered union from 'holding itself out in any manner whatsoever as being able to further the interests of the members thereof or some of them in relation to

their employers or to collect any contributions, whether in money or kind, for the purpose of carrying out any function of a native trade union' (61). The bill gave the Industrial Registrar extensive powers of control over registered unions. The election of a 'non-Native' to a position of office in a 'native' union was made subject to the approval of the Minister of Labour. All disputes had to be settled through a statutory mediation board and strikes were made illegal, the penalty being a £500 fine or three years in gaol. CNETU expressed profound disappointment with a bill which was based on racial discrimination, denied african workers the right of collective bargaining, barred strike action and excluded all but urban, industrial workers. It saw the bill rightly as 'a clear indication that the government is determined to perpetuate its present policy of cheap labour' (62).

In an article published in 1945 entitled 'The two voices within the United Party', Rene de Villiers wrote that anyone who listened to the debate on native affairs at the 1945 Transvaal Congress of the United Party 'must have been distressed and despondent about the future of progressive thought and action in South Africa' (63). He bemoaned the fact that the Congress 'demanded that the authorities expel natives from urban and peri-urban areas, restrict their freedom of movement by stricter application of the pass laws and generally get tough with them'. At the end of the 1947 session of parliament Senator Basner captured the mood of white politics when he wrote that 'the session was an ignominious one for the government because the Prime Minister was determined to appease the Nationalist Party on all important foreign and

domestic issues. This policy of appeasement paralysed his party and stultified the progress of our country', Senator Edgar Brookes wrote in the same year that 'the pass laws remain after a decade of agitation and protest', the housing shortage was disastrous and 'most of all the general status of the African remains virtually unaltered... he meets the intense frustration of barriers depending on race and colour alone from which there seems to be no escape' (64).

What especially worried liberal opinion was what the Institute for Race Relations called in 1945 'the profound concern that ... there is a growing tendency among younger people in all the Non-European groups to despair of conciliatory methods and to believe that only hatred, employing the method of direct action and, if need be, culminating in revolution, can bring about the fundamental changes in status which we desire' (65). The same point was echoed in an editorial in *Inkundla Ya Bantu* by Ngubane when he wrote in March 1945 that 'if the African is going to be denied the already much whittled down right of assembly, he will next work underground for the realisation of those ideals he has up to now fought for constitutionally' (66).

We may only speculate here about why liberalism collapsed as a political force in this period. There was the question of the war. The position of the allies, including that of the South African government, turned in their favour after 1942 with the successful resistance of the Russians against the German invasion and the entry into the war of the Americans,

At home the government's support for the war placed it under pressure from afrikaner nationalists opposed to British imperialism, whose hostility the government sought to appease by taking a tough stand against black protest. The government felt and was stronger after 1943 than it had been in the earlier years of the war. Crucially, the strike wave of 1942-43 did enough to frighten the ruling class into withdrawing concessions but not enough to force it to accommodate to the power of labour, as its rapid exhaustion in early 1943 revealed the vulnerability of this young labour movement. Behind the timidity of bourgeois liberalism lay the fear that moderate reform from above would unleash a tidal wave of protest from below and the conviction that repression could contain the threat from below. It may appear at first sight that the abandonment of reform was provoked by the militancy of workers, but it makes more sense to see it as a response to the perceived weaknesses which accompanied the militancy.

The liberal bourgeoisie either endorsed or had no power to stop the government's attacks on the working class, thus paving the way for the rise of apartheid and their own removal from office. If there was to be a democratic revolution in South Africa, the liberal bourgeoisie proved itself incapable of leading it but vital in facilitating the growth of those forces which could lead it. The working class was the motor of democratic change, yet long before the rise of apartheid this turn in state policy away from liberalism had a profoundly disintegrative effect on its organisation and capacities.

Trade union strategy: the containment of industrial action

The structural weaknesses of the black working class and the marginalisation of liberal forces willing to make an accommodation with sections of the black working class were closely linked phenomena. The social forces behind the black labour movement were not such as to induce the need for accommodation on the part of capital. This relation of forces, however, was not simply determined by structural considerations. What was also at issue was the conscious element: how the black trade unions responded to these rapidly deteriorating conditions of struggle.

The growth of black unions had been heavily dependent on the use of legal methods and on the state's willingness to make concessions. As the element of reform receded, the unions were faced with an uphill task of adapting their forms of organisation and action to a new and hostile climate. Until 1942, some progress could be achieved without recourse to strike action through appeals to bodies like the Wage Board. When the state refused to co-operate, this strategy lost its utility. To sustain their advance, the unions had little choice but to turn to industrial action and in the context of the war this meant turning to illegality.

Many trade unionists whose experience was grounded in the use of legal methods found this turn difficult to make. They continued to function in

the paradigm of an industrial relations model which required a consensus with the bourgeoisie, while the bourgeoisie itself was ever more opposed to the granting of any concessions to the black unions. While the rulers of South Africa resolved to make no further accommodations to black labour, many black trade unions continued to channel the struggles of black workers into a framework of lobbying and legal reform.

This policy was in evidence during the strike wave of 1942-43. At the CNETU annual conference held in February 1943, the *Guardian* reported that, while delegate after delegate pointed to the abominable pay and conditions of the African workers, they deplored any stoppage which might hinder the war effort. Leading trade unionists proposed instead a campaign to educate the public in the need for a minimum wage 'to arouse morale on the home front' (67). Similarly when iron and steel workers protested that they were starving and called for immediate industrial action, the union leadership prevailed upon them to refrain from striking for the sake of the war effort (68).

This policy was also evident in the trade union response to strikes of migrant workers in the power industry. In 1942, 1943 and 1944, migrant workers at the VPF Power Company took strike action. Some of these workers had previously been organised in Gordon's General Workers' Union but since its collapse were not unionised. In the course of the strike of 1944, seemingly at the request of the government, Makabeni formed on behalf of these workers the African Gas and Power Workers Union. The

union reported graphically on the terrible conditions which gave rise to the strike and on the use of troops to break the strike and added concerning its own role that it was 'to the undying credit of the strikers at Brakpen that they categorically refused to return to work until their own trade union arrived at the scene and advised them to go back to work' (69). The union's account of its relation to the government illustrates well its own attitude:

Twelve months ago we settled a strike ... on the understanding that the VFP would negotiate an agreement... When the negotiations started, the company refused any concessions... Six months ago we stated our case to the Mine Native Wages Commission... We were told that we did not fall within its terms of reference... Five months ago we wrote to the Minister of Labour asking for arbitration... We were told the matter was receiving attention... We told the Minister of Native Labour that unless the government appointed an arbitrator, the union officials could not hold the workers back... If the government would not act, we told the government we could do nothing...

Notwithstanding the government's intransigence in the face of repeated petitions, Makabeni re-affirmed the union's official policy of opposing strike action:

We have endeavoured for over a year to hold the workers back from striking. We did so because it is the accepted policy of the trade union movement to support the government in their war effort and to avoid anything which will embarrass them. We are still determined to pursue this policy in the future.

The workers were not apparently consulted in this decision. The terms on

which the strike was called off were that the recommendations of the Mines Natives Wages Commission under Lansdown, set up in response to strikes of migrant workers on the mines, be extended to power workers, that they be acted upon immediately and that they be backdated. The Lansdown Commission was later to commend the restraining role played by Gana Makabeni, the chairperson of CNETU, as well as CNETU itself:

The Commission appreciates the discretion and moderation which characterise Mr Makabeni's submission of the case for workers... CNETU wisely exerted its influence to restrain excessive demands and induce the workers to suspend further action pending the determination of their claims after inquiry by a Commission (70).

The Commission did not, however, meet the power workers' claims, the union collapsed and later Makabeni bitterly recalled his own disillusionment. The Progressive Trade Union Group (PTU), set up in 1944 as a left opposition to the CNETU leadership, fulminated against CNETU's pacifying role in this strike:

It was not a mistake that the Commission ... had to commend the good work done by Makabeni in breaking the VFP strike ... The VFP strike was a challenge to the cheap labour policy of the Chamber of Mines. The success would have had repercussions on the whole mining industry, and, powerless to do anything by itself, the Government had to employ somebody to 'DISCIPLINE' the workers. Therefore this commendation of Makabeni by the Commission was in respect of services rendered (71).

Makabeni's actions may well have been motivated by tactical considerations concerning the weakness of the workers' organisation and

the improbability of success through strike action. The fact that his own moderate approach failed did not mean that the more militant approach favoured by the PTU would have succeeded. In the event, however, not only was the strike lost and its demands not met, but the workers appear to have rapidly lost faith in the union.

Baruch Hirson's account of the emergence of the Progressive Trade Union Group in 1944 is instructive in highlighting CNETU's attitude toward militant trade unionism (72). The African Milling Workers Union put in a demand for a minimum wage of £2 a week. When this was refused, 2000 workers came out on strike for ten days. To circumvent the ban on strikes, organisation was put in the hands of an *ad hoc* group of union officials, known as the 'General Staff'. The strike was beaten through the arrest of some 600 workers, the criminal prosecution of 16 workers and two officials, and the use of scab labour. CNETU supported the union's demand but opposed strike action. Before the strike, it issued a statement saying:

Since May the union, knowing that it was the accepted policy of the Non-European trade union movement to support the Government's war effort, had been holding back the workers ... The African trade unions were still determined to pursue this policy in the future.

In response to the government's suppression of the strike, CNETU declared its 'gravest alarm ... at the concerted government offensive against the trade union movement' but re-affirmed its 'endeavour ... to avoid strike action' (73). The 'General Staff', who sought the

assistance of the trotskyite Workers International League (WIL) - the secretary of the union, Molefi, was a member - was vilified as 'trotskyist' and the spectre of a 'general strike' incited by trotskyists was raised in apprehension by the leadership of CNETU. A certain R Fleet, Communist Party member and trade union official, warned that trotskyists 'had even a so-called general staff meeting in the offices of CNETU at which, if it had not been for the intervention of the local committee, the possibility existed of a general strike of the African unions taking place' (74).

The strike was defeated but a left opposition within CNETU, known as the Progressive Trade Union Group, was formed out of the 'General Staff' in response to CNETU's lack of support. Stating that 'the salvation of the workers lies in a strong, powerful council', it called for a new leadership in CNETU and an 'All-Embracing Emergency Conference' to discuss the strike. In response CNETU warned its members to have nothing to do with the conference and denounced the PTU, 'Fellow workers', it wrote, 'forces of reaction and disruption at work'. A pamphlet was written for CNETU on the PTU by Hymie Basner called 'wreckers at work', which argued that 'in the larger field of national liberation and democratic rights such adventures may lead the non-European masses into costly and fruitless adventures, unless responsible leaders of the African and other non-European sections take energetic steps to organise'. What truth there was to the charge of adventurism levelled against the PTU is a question to which we shall return below. As the milling strike revealed, militant leadership did not guarantee victory.

The most revealing example of the relation of unions to industrial action is provided by the african mineworkers strike of 1946. The African Mineworkers Union, set up in 1941, was dominated by the Communist Party. In 1942-43 there was a series of local stoppages on the mines, serious enough to lead to the appointment of the *Mines Native Wages Commission*, better known as the Lansdown Commission. The African Mineworkers Union (AMWU) welcomed the appointment of the Commission 'as a token of earnestness on the part of the government' (75) and put the miners' grievances to the Commission. It was a long list, concerning starvation wages, the contract-labour system, the compounds described as 'sleeping coffins', long hours, accident, assaults by white supervisors, and the lack and poor quality of food. The union complained about the refusal of the Chamber of Mines to recognise its existence, but its policy was to desist from any industrial action pending the Commission's report (76). It continued to build the membership of the union, according to its own estimate from 1827 members in 1943 to around 25,000 in 1944 or about 8% of the total black labour force of over 300,000.

Calls for strike action at the 1944 conference of the AMWU resulted from further cuts in rations and severe food shortages. They were met by the union leadership under J.B. Marks, a Communist Party member, with a further plea for patience while it sought to have the findings of the Lansdown Commission accepted by the government. One participant recalled two years later that 'over 1000 delegates ... were present. They wanted ... to strike there and then, and on the other hand you had officials who wanted to know whether we had exhausted all channels of negotiation

for coming to an amicable settlement' (77). After an exhaustive examination of wage scales in the mines lasting more than a year, the Lansdown Commission recommended a small cost of living increase, a boot allowance, 150% overtime rates and a minimum wage for surface workers. It did not meet the wage demands of the workers and left the compound system, the pass laws, the colour bar, white domination in the workplace and the illegality of black trade unionism untouched. 'Ordinary mine natives', the Report read, 'coming as they did from the reserves and the tribal areas ... had not reached the development necessary for trade unionism' (78).

In 1945 *Inkululeko* announced that the African Mineworkers' Union was shortly to meet the Prime Minister in Pretoria. It said that the union leaders would 'put forward the demands of African workers on the mines for more pay in accordance with the mine Native Wages Commission, and for the right of the union to hold meetings of the workers - at present prevented by regulation 1425' (79). The union met with total rejection from the Acting Prime Minister, Hofmeyr. The chamber refused to negotiate with the AMWU, ignored all correspondence with the union, and was busy victimising its organisers. With further cuts in rations (30% in 1944), there were demonstrations, hunger strikes, work stoppages and seizure of stores, organised by ad hoc Workers' Committees, demanding more and better food. The union, however, continued in its efforts to negotiate a settlement without supporting industrial action. J.B. Marks commented on the union's ability to temper its members' anger, when he told a mass Emergency Conference of the AMWU that 'the mine officials

and compound managers admit that our meetings encouraged discipline amongst the workers. Far fewer cases of such actions as the stoning of compound managers' houses have occurred since these meetings were in progress' (80).

In January 1946, the AMWU warned that 'the African miners are saturated with grievances and unless something is done immediately to ameliorate their conditions, there is sure to be a series of sporadic and spontaneous revolts' (81). Food shortages were a cause of deep unrest. On one mine 'the mine manager told the workers that there was not enough food owing to the draught' to which the miners replied by 'raiding the compound kitchen and all the food' (82). The government put up posters in the mine compounds, 'explaining to the Natives the reasons for the shortages of meat, milie meal and kaffir beer, and pointing out that such deficiencies arose through no fault on the part of the Mining Industry' (83), but the workers were not assuaged. Majoro and Marks warned that 'a most serious situation is emerging... not only on the Crown mines. At Spring mines, for example, dissatisfaction has been aggravated by the recent interference of the police against the workers, when they expressed their resentment at ration cuts'.

In April of 1946, the AMWU addressed four letters to the Chamber of Mines stating its demands for a R1 minimum per shift for black workers. The letters went unanswered except for one declaring that 'the matter was receiving attention'. As spontaneous strikes broke out, the union

issued a statement declaring that the strikers were 'not acting on the advice of the leadership' and that 'despite the difficulties placed in our way by both employers and government, our organiser succeeded in contacting these workers and impressing upon them the need for discipline and restraint' (84). Finally, the union was impelled to take action. On Sunday 4th of August 1946 some 1000 delegates attended a meeting at which the decision to call a strike was taken. According to Diamond, the unknown miner from the floor who demanded the strike said: 'it is better to die here than to go home empty-handed', to which an old miner shouted: 'we on the mines are dead men already' (85). Simons and Simons wrote that 'the proceedings were widely published, but mine owners and government refused to credit Africans with the capacity to organise concerted action on a large scale in defiance of the elaborate system of surveillance, intimidation and espionage that operated in the compounds' (86). In evidence at his trial, charged with sedition for among other things engineering the strike, Communist Party member Bram Fisher told of how he had decided to go on holiday during August 1946, believing that no major crisis would occur. He conceded - though we should of course be cautious of evidence drawn from a state trial - that the Communist Party had been caught off guard and had not expected the strike to occur (87).

The union took a cautious approach to the strike. As J.B.Marks put it when discussing his role:

I explained to them what a strike would involve, sacrifices would have to be made, to refrain from falling for any

provocation, to be non-violent, To do nothing on the day of the strike but to remain in their rooms. (88)

The strike began on 12th August with some 70,000 workers participating. Support from CNETU came on the afternoon of the second day of the strike when it resolved that if the Chamber of Mines was not prepared to open negotiations with the African Mine Workers Union by 15th August, the fourth day of the strike, they would call a sympathy strike (89). The strike, however, was of short duration and by the fourth day more than half the mineworkers had already returned to work. Nabuth Mokgatle, a member of CNETU's executive, was critical of CNETU's lack of practical support for the strike. He wrote that 'the day before the strike I was summoned to be in Johannesburg to plan what was to be done to see the strike through ... The meeting had to find ways of contacting the workers and providing them with money and food and found that none of this had been planned' (90). The miners were immediately exposed to ruthless attack. The union offices were raided and its leaders arrested. An attempt by workers to stage a sit-down strike at the rockface was stopped by the police with the miners being baton-charged and driven up stope by stope to the surface. Similarly, a march by workers to the office of the Chief Native Commissioner in Johannesburg was dispersed by the police with considerable violence. At least 12 Africans were killed and some 1200 injured.

The miners lost their immediate demands, the AMWU was crushed and trade unionism in general suffered a major defeat. At first sight this result might appear to endorse the wisdom of CNETU's war-time opposition to

industrial action in a period when black workers were too weak effectively to confront the employers and the state. This seems to have been the lesson drawn by a number of leading trade unionists at the time, including Makabeni, who blamed the Communist Party for leading the unions down the path of adventurism in 1946. Yet the strike also highlighted the inefficacy of the liberal model of industrial relations held by the union leadership in the face of the ruthlessness of the state and mineowners on one side and the desperate rebelliousness of the mineworkers on the other. Year after year appeals to the state and employers landed on deaf ears, while the mineworkers exhausted themselves in copious heroic but isolated acts of resistance.

We may only speculate about what might have been different if the strike had been called during the war, linking up with other industrial and community struggles and exploiting the vulnerability of the state. By the time that the union leadership relaxed its opposition to industrial action, the balance of forces between the state and black labour had shifted significantly in favour of the state. The labour movement had lost its way and there were visible signs of disintegration. It is not possible to say whether more militant policies would have produced better immediate results as far as the workers' own demands were concerned, only that the legal policies which were pursued both failed in this respect and contributed to the collapse of the union movement itself. More militant policies might at least have left, as a heritage for the future, a more organic relationship between unions and workers and a more favourable foundation for post-war union organisation.

Legalism in the unions

The prominent feature of strikes between 1941 and 1945 was that they were generally conducted by rank and file workers reliant on their own resources, while union officials sought to restrain them within the bounds of legality and substituted appeals to the state for direct action. That unions and workers were often to be found pushing in different directions was a recipe for the decomposition of the movement. Strike action, however, carried real risks to unions given the weak state of their organisation and the ruthlessness of the state. Many trade unionists were for good reason reluctant to embark on a course of illegal action with uncertain prospects of success, especially as there appeared to be other avenues of negotiation still open.

For example, War Measure 145, at the same time as prohibiting strikes, also made available arbitration which could then serve as a focus of union demands. The state's policy was to counterpose arbitration to strike action, warning that it would not be prepared to grant arbitration if members of a black union went illegally on strike. The Wage Boards though largely emptied of content remained in form and some employers still offered a degree of informal recognition to 'responsible' union leaders. This attitude was exemplified by a meeting between the African Cement Workers Union and the Pretoria Cement Company in March 1943, when the management stated that it would not formally recognise a black union until such time as the government recognised it.

but agreed to permit union organisers access to the workers, saying that it would 'look to the union for collaboration in preventing disputes arising as a result of the mischievous activities of irresponsible persons' (91).

Over and above these considerations, there appear to have been internal divisions in the unions which led officials to oppose strikes even when their members called for or embarked upon them. The reason lay in part in the relations between the workers and the officials. There were of course differences of class background with many officials coming from the intelligentsia or the petty bourgeoisie and entering the workers' movement from the outside. Even the most committed and militant trade union leaders were very much an elite, separated from their members by class, culture and often language. In general, however, this meeting of the radical intelligentsia and black workers should be seen not as a problem but as an advance for both sides: a vital ingredient in the building of any workers' movement. The real question was not that of class origins but rather of the class relations between trade union officials and their members. Was there a problem of bureaucratisation in the union leadership which accounted for the policies it pursued?

Our answer must be tentative given the underdeveloped state of research into CNETU. It seems to have been the case that in many instances unions did not have structures to enforce democratic accountability on their officials or to allow shop stewards and other workers to participate in

union decision-making. Union education programmes were rare. The personalisation of unions around particular individuals symptomised the special role they played in the absence of strong collective organisation. Discussion of trade union democracy was notable mainly for its absence (92). In a number of cases trade union officials were accused of placing their careers before the interests of their members and critics of the CNETU leadership often raised the issue of careerism as a problem. There was some evidence of corruption with several cases of embezzlement recorded. In some instances union members gave up their union cards out of disgust with corrupt leaders while in others union members were able to expel the malefactors. There was a lack of basic skills in book-keeping, negotiating and organising which was one of the problems addressed by the African Trade Union Technical Advisory Committee, formed in 1947 by liberals and officials from the 'registered' trade union movement to provide classes for union officials in CNETU (93).

Commenting in its prejudicial way on the decline of the trade union movement in 1951, the Botha Commission into Industrial Legislation argued that 'the Native trade union movement over-reached itself... There were few trained leaders... The affairs of many unions fell into a state of confusion'. It pointed to the 'expulsion of European leaders who had done much to organise unions on sound lines' and declared that some of the 'Native leaders who succeeded them ... became dictators who imposed their own desires on the rank and file'. It cited the evidence of Gana Makabeni before the Commission that the failure to recognise

african trade unions in law led to 'irresponsible people taking advantage of that... There were people who could be got rid of, but there was no other machinery to get rid of them' (94). Racist assumptions ran through the Commission's account but it seems to have been true that the affairs of many unions fell into confusion, even though its source had nothing to do with whether its leaders were white or not.

Superficially it may appear possible to trace the source of legalism in the unions to the legal methods successfully employed by Gordon, Koza and their fellow trade unionists in the Joint Committee in the latter years of the 1930s, when they fought for material improvements for workers through the state wage boards rather than through strike action. The problem of legalism, however, lay not in the exploitation of legal openings in the earlier period, which proved effective, but rather in the continuation of these methods under no longer propitious circumstances. The trotkysant practioners of legal methods in the 1930s like Dan Koza often formed the more militant leaders of unions after 1942, while the Communist Party trade unionists who had been critical of Max Gordon's legalism in the 1930s took the lead in adopting a legalistic approach after 1941.

From the evidence we have available, the relation of trade union officials to their members does not suffice to explain the legalism of the unions nor their reluctance to support industrial action. The major

factor behind the determination of union policy lay outside of the unions themselves and in the relation of trade unionism to politics. It was a political decision to contain the unions as far as possible within constitutional, no-strike bounds. It was not a decision arrived at, as it were, autonomously within the unions. Trade unions do not live in a political cocoon and even the most 'independent' unions are not independent of politics. In this particular period, political organisations played a decisive role in the establishment and development of black unions and had a direct influence over the paths they pursued. The crisis after the war manifested itself as a crisis of trade unionism but its roots lay in a political crisis far beyond the sphere of trade unionism alone.

Chapter 3

Labour and Politics: the People's Front

The most important determinants of the policies of the black labour movement after 1941 arose out of the liberal democratic alliance forged between the CPSA and the ANC. These two otherwise divergent political organisations came together from very different starting points to constitute the core elements of what the Communist Party called the 'people's front' or 'national front'. (1)

In the mid-1930s the CPSA was an extremely weak organisation, its ranks decimated by the purge or voluntary departure of its best militants during the excesses of its Third Period between 1929 and 1934 (2). During those years the party was 'bolshvised', which meant in reality that it was brought under tight control from Moscow. The next dozen or so years were to see a marked revival and then decline of the fortunes of the party as it adopted a series of sharp strategic 'turns': in 1935 it turned away from the sectarianism of the third period to adopt a popular front policy against the threat of fascism; in 1939 with the signing of the Hitler-Stalin pact it reverted back to a left period of class struggle on the home front and opposition to imperialist war; in 1941 with the German invasion of Russia it turned to its national front policy of support for the war and opposition to industrial action; in 1946 it took a mini-left turn, relaxing its opposition to industrial

action now that the war was over; in 1947 it adopted what it called its 'broad democratic front' policy to keep the 'Nats' out of power. We shall see in our discussion of the 1950s that such oscillations continued into the next decade; a left period between 1949 and 1952, followed by a sharp move to the right between 1953 and 1959 under the umbrella of a 'united front' and then an abrupt left turn to armed struggle at the close of the decade.

Once the party had been 'bolshvised', a rhythmic rotation from what we might call Communist sectarianism to africanised opportunism was set in motion at the outset and carried on throughout this period. As the fluctuations continued, however, so the periodic rediscovery of an indigenous african nationalism grew stronger and Communist sectarianism weaker. Superficially this appeared to represent the growth of an independent policy for the South African Communist Party, which appeared not only faithful to an international Communist movement but also to an authentic african radicalism in the South African context. The CPSA certainly did develop its own national character and did not blindly respond to external stimuli from the Soviet Union. Yet all the strategic turns adopted by the Communist Party in South Africa corresponded with the fluctuations of Soviet foreign policy, whether or not they also obeyed compelling needs within the South African Communists themselves. The turn to african nationalism in this regard did not represent merely a sensitivity to local conditions but was another type of Communist response to a Russian stimulus. The party's lurches were not in response

to internal changes in the South African class struggle nor in the party itself, but reflected the push and pull of an external force. (3)

This is not to say that South African Communists unthinkingly responded to Russian orders. Rather what we find is a profound loyalty to the Soviet Union as the motherland of socialism and a conviction that the defence of the Soviet Union as the only socialist state was the first duty of every Communist. South African Communists were not puppets of the Soviet Union without independent thoughts of their own, but whatever independent thoughts they had, it was their fealty to the Soviet Union which prevailed. Local initiative had to be employed in applying according to their own intelligence the general line dictated from Moscow to national conditions: a distinction akin to the difference between strategy and tactics. In this application there were exceptions, lags, misunderstandings and personal refusals, but through the 1940s and 1950s the general line of South African Communist policy was determined in Moscow with little regard for local conditions. (4)

The oscillations of CPSA policy corresponded with the turns taken by practically all Communist Parties throughout the world, even though they were given their own national hallmark in each case. This general approach was theorised by Stalin in 1930 in a speech on American Communism. It would be wrong, he argued,

to ignore the specific peculiarities of American capitalism. The Communist Party must take them into account in its work. But it

would be still more wrong to base the activities of the Communist Party on these specific features, since the foundation of the activities of every Communist Party, including the American Communist Party, on which it must base itself, must be the general features of capitalism which are the same for all countries, and not its specific features in any given country. It is precisely on this that the internationalism of the Communist Parties rests. The specific features are merely supplementary to the general features. (5)

This conception of the world economy as simply a sum of national parts of the same type, whose specific features are merely supplementary to the general features, is what justified the enforcement of the same general policies for all national parties, including the South African, regardless of national conditions. The one great exception was the USSR whose peculiarity was so potent as to make possible the growth of socialism in one country, regardless of what happened in the rest of the world just so long as its borders could be effectively secured. In this theory an almost messianic Soviet nationalism was combined with a bureaucratically imposed abstract internationalism. The task of the Comintern was seen primarily as one of protecting the frontiers of socialism from foreign intervention. (6)

Many South African Communists undoubtedly thought that they could reconcile their duties to the 'international Communist movement' and to the indigenous traditions of black radicalism in South Africa. Many saw in one turn or another the possibilities of such an integration. The

popular front came as a relief from the virulent sectarianism of the third period; Communists felt that they could start relating to people again. Though the anti-imperialist period of the Hitler-Stalin pact came as a shock to many Communists, at least it allowed them to relate both to black workers and to militant afrikaner workers in ways which the popular front period had blocked. Then the national front period in its turn resolved the shock of endorsing the division of Europe by the great dictators and allowed South African Communists to participate in the world struggle against nazism abroad and afrikaner nationalism at home. And so on. Each new line could be desired or rationalised because it provided one of the ingredients that the other had lacked. Anyone who stayed within the party for more than five years was certain to live through a change of line and have to adapt his or her conscience or consciousness accordingly. (7)

What usually appears in the literature as the golden period of the people's front, seen to loosen the rigid ideological bonds of previous years as well as break from the excruciating pain of siding with Hitler against 'imperialism', was one moment within the multiple fluctuations of party policy. The party's first loyalty was not to the people's front but to the Soviet Union and it was ready to abandon the people's front when enjoined so to do. The people's front was the policy of Communists but it was not a communist policy; indeed it was not even a very radical policy, its main function being to draw the working class behind the war effort of the government in the hope and expectation that it would be rewarded with reform and democratic concessions. When this policy was

first instituted, many Communists were doubtless convinced that it was a viable and correct strategy with a good chance of success. When it became quite apparent to anyone with eyes to look that it was not working in the latter years of the war, that far from winning liberal reforms state policy was turning ever more reactionary, the party could not and did not change its policy until it was allowed to do so too late after the war was over. This is why the people's front could not and did not develop into an authentic South African socialism. The people's front should be seen as the people's front of the Communist Party and not as a people's front *sui generis*.

Let us examine this history in more detail. Between 1936 and 1939, the CPSA supported what it called a 'people's united front against imperialism, fascism and war', as part of the Comintern's policy of allying with 'progressive' forces opposed to German expansionism. In the South African context the people's front policy looked to three progressive forces; african nationalism, the white labour organisations and progressive capital, seeking a common front on the principle of 'no criticism' of potential allies (8). This policy, first aired in 1935, introduced a breath of fresh political air after the sectarian politics of the third period but it did little to advance the party's relation to the black working class.

There were two basic reasons for this. First, the CPSA's search for an alliance with the leadership of the Labour Party and the Trades and

Labour Council (TLC), the political and economic wings respectively of the white labour movement, entailed definite compromises with its racism. For example, a resolution of the Political Bureau called for a united front of the CPSA, the segregationist Labour Party and the rank and file of the Afrikaner Nationalist Party as a first step to building a broader popular front. This proposal was based *inter alia* on demands for a racially differentiated minimum wage of 10/- a day for whites and 5/- a day for africans (9). The concession to white labourism was reiterated by CPSA representatives on the TLC and in the party's 1938 Manifesto.

Sometimes party propaganda to white workers was couched in racially charged language, as when the civilised labour policy was criticised on the ground that 'the natives are ... getting far more than their share in the number of jobs' and white workers were assured that labour equality would not lead to marrying natives' (10). In its own terms the policy met with limited success. In neither of the two front organisations through which the CPSA pursued its alliance with white labour leaders - the Friends of the Soviet Union and the League Against War and Fascism - could it secure the affiliation of the Labour Party or the TLC, but the party did win representation on the TLC regional executives. The cost incurred, however, by this policy was the difficulty in relating to black workers which stemmed from the party's concessions to the racialism of white labour. Although the CPSA was committed in principle to drawing black and white into one movement, in practice it was forced to divide its popular front activities into two

segments. There were even moves, finally rejected, to separate the party organisation itself into two racially defined sectors.

The second reason why the popular front did little to advance the CPSA's relation to black workers was that its orientation to blacks was mediated through the alliance it sought to construct with the national liberation organisations; at first the All Africa Convention (AAC) and then the ANC. First to Jabavu and then to Seme, the two liberal leaders of the AAC and ANC respectively, the Party said: 'Let us put away the differences of the way toward national liberation. All of us have one common cause' (11). Since neither the AAC nor the ANC were at the time at all interested in building a labour movement, the result was that in work among black people the priority of the CPSA was to attract the middle class nationalists rather than organise workers. This did not mean that some individual CPSA members and groups did not become involved in the organisation of black unions, particularly in those regions where the party's national line was least dominant. Notably Ray Alexander played a leading role in the formation of the South African Railway and Harbour Workers Union in the Cape. On the Witwatersrand, however, the CPSA verbally supported Makabeni's Co-ordinating Committee of African Unions but was itself largely inactive.

Further, the party's hostility to trotskyism cut it off from the main organising focus of the black trade union movement, Max Gordon's Joint Committee. Thus when important unity talks were held between the Joint

and Co-ordinating Committees in 1938 and Makabeni resisted unification on the ground that the secretaries of black trade unions must not be white - in effect an ultimatum that unity would only be possible on condition that Max Gordon played no leading role - the CPSA supported Makabeni's position notwithstanding its own policy of advocating the affiliation of black unions to the white-dominated Trades and Labour Council. (12)

At the international level it was difficult to reconcile the CPSA's espousal of liberal-democratic goals in South Africa with its endorsement of the show-trials and official murders committed by Stalin's regime against all manner of opponents. One militant, N. Mokgatlhe, who was later to join the Party, expressed the repugnance that many others must have felt in the 1930s in the following terms:

While I was hesitating whether I should apply for membership of the Communist Party, newspapers came along with reports that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was being purged of its best and leading figures... Some were sentenced to death by firing squads. After reading the verdicts, I remember asking myself, how can I join the party which destroys its cream? (13)

The popular front period lasted from 1935 to 1939. It introduced a fresh political air after the sectarianism of the preceding third period, but unlike France or Spain the party did not find itself at the head of any mass upsurge. To the extent that class militancy and organisation among black workers were escalating, the CPSA was largely divorced from these developments. The party could not claim to have made a major break-

through. The popular front period came to an end when the battle-ground of Europe brought about a new turn in Soviet foreign policy and with it a radical change in the CPSA's internal orientation in South Africa.

In August 1939 the non-aggression pact between Hitler and Stalin was signed. Poland was divided up between German and Soviet forces, Finland was handed over to the Soviet occupation and the Comintern turned its back on popular fronts against fascism and embraced instead a policy of opposition to what it sometimes characterised as an inter-imperialist war and sometimes as an imperialist war by France and Britain against Germany and the Soviet Union. It called off its anti-Hitler crusade at the very moment when the nazi legions marched to enslave Europe. The Comintern's rhetoric was couched in leninist language, for the working class to 'put an end to the war after its own fashion ... to destroy once and for all the fundamental causes giving rise to imperialist war', but its content was an agreement between the dictators to share the spoils of Europe together (14). The Comintern's new instructions to its member parties around the world were that both belligerent camps, the nazi and the democratic, pursued imperialist aims. Either there was nothing to choose between them or the democracies were presented as the major enemy.

Among CPSA members in South Africa there was shock and confusion at first but the party soon acceded to the new line and found a number of secondary benefits flowing from it. In opposition to the South African

government's participation in the war against Hitler, the party could focus on a perceptive critique of the contradictions between the racism of the South African state and its war on the side of 'democracy'. The contrast was posed in powerful terms:

Let us not dream about breaking the chains of Nazism overseas, when we ourselves are chained like helots in our own country ... However much 'western democracy' endeavours to rid the world of the barbarous creed of Nazism, they cannot fight with clean hands. (15)

The CPSA declared that the war against racism and fascism must start at home in the fight for the democratic rights of the black majority.

Edward Roux exemplified the approach when he argued that:

to European workers who have enjoyed the benefits of democracy ... this may seem a fairly good reason for supporting democratic governments waging war against fascist governments... for the oppressed Non-Europeans in the colonies, these arguments will seem unnecessary, for we in the colonies have suffered for years under a government which seems to us little different from fascism. (16)

The idea that 'the war for democracy begins at home' was coupled with a commitment to republicanism. It was stressed that 'the main struggle which confronts the party is the anti-imperialist struggle' for the establishment of an independent republic in South Africa not under the control of British imperialism (17). The party conceded that this policy caused problems as far as its relation to right-wing afrikaner nationalists was concerned, noting at its 1940 conference that the dilemma of 'oppose the war and support the pro-Nazi nationalists' could

not be avoided even though this policy did not have universal support among the members. (18)

The CPSA's turn put great pressure on its links with its erstwhile progressive allies all of whom were strongly pro-war. TLC bureaucrats dubbed them 'Communazis' and accused them of establishing 'a new god called Stalin' and Bill Andrews was not re-elected to office in the TLC (19). The ANC and the AAC, after initial hesitation about supporting a war in which black soldiers were not even permitted to carry arms, gave their full support to the war effort and declared their joint intention to 'counteract the mischievous (anti-war) doctrines that are being disseminated among Africans' (20). The government was intensely hostile to anti-war activity, charging Yusuf Dadoo under the war emergency regulations for publishing a leaflet addressed to 'non-Europeans' which declared:

You are being asked to support the war for freedom, justice and democracy. Do you enjoy the fruits of freedom, justice and democracy? What you do enjoy is pass and poll-tax laws, segregation, white labour policy, low wages, high rents, poverty, unemployment and vicious colour-bar laws. (21)

On the other hand, the CPSA's turn away from the popular front freed the it from its policy of 'no public criticism' of potential allies and allowed it to appeal directly to black workers. The CPSA could now begin to organise black workers in earnest, arguing that 'the people's interests will be safeguarded against the evils of war economy only by means of an independent struggle for rights... There are the immediate

economic demands arising out of the increased cost of living... There are immediate political demands arising out of the Government's attack upon militant trade union leaders and Communists. These demands must be taken up' (22).

It was in this period accordingly that initiatives to form the African Mineworkers' Union and CNETU were taken by the CPSA and a working relation with trotskyist trade union organisers like Max Gordon was formed. At the 1940 party conference the executive warned that the government would gain black support for its war-effort unless 'the people are led in a struggle for their own rights and economic improvement, unless they are made to see that the war provides an opportunity for a strong forward movement' (23). For the party the struggle at home was determined primarily as a means to obstruct the war against fascism abroad, but the anti-war line gave free rein to militants in the party who were chafing at the bit in their endeavour to turn to black workers for their own sake and in their own right,

One of these was Ray Alexander who used the political space made available to criticise the Johannesburg branch for its lack of work in trade unions generally and its neglect of the mineworkers. She urged the organisation of African miners; 'it is not impossible, It can be done. It must be done. All obstacles must be overcome by Bolsheviks' (24). At the 1940 CPSA conference, W. Kalk, a trade union organiser in the TLC, could now say what would have been impossible a year earlier;

The trotskyists in Johannesburg can call a meeting of 10,000 Africans, but the Party can't. The Party has not the elementary conception on how to organise trade unions. We had strong unions in 1928. Where are they today? The Party had a sectarian left outlook - strike, strike, strike - that is all they heard and the result was that the African unions believed that the Communists brought them into trouble. The Trotskyist unions can raise the money. They have negotiated with the employers and the Labour Department. So the Trotskyists have succeeded because they had one man with considerable influence. (25)

This view was supported at the conference by Edwin Mofutsanyana who agreed that Gordon was 'a leading figure among the Africans today' and that although he went to the Labour Department and the employers to 'settle the question in a peaceful manner... he kept on organising the workers. Therefore he succeeded' (26).

The 'anti-imperialist' period was a productive time for the CPSA in relation to black working class organisation. Just as popular frontism had been a release from the excesses of sectarianism, so too anti-imperialism was a release from the limitations of popular frontism. The fundamental question facing the CPSA was how to integrate its rapidly developing working class base in South Africa with its fealty for the policy imperatives of the stalinist state in Russia. For militants like N Mokgatlhe the pact with Hitler was too much to swallow whatever the secondary benefits were for the CPSA's orientation to black labour. Mokgatlhe recounted that he was ready to join the Party when

another storm came along to blow me off. It was the arrival of Molotov in Berlin to sign a non-aggression pact with Ribbentrop. Fascism joining hands with Communism, enemies becoming friends: 'No', I said, 'not for me'... I was disappointed to hear that Communists all over the world, including the Soviet Union, were not supporting the war... I was sure that if Hitler won, fascism in South Africa would have won. (27)

In June 1941 the German invasion of Russia inaugurated another dramatically new turn for the CPSA.

From the CPSA's viewpoint the entry of the Soviet Union into the war transformed its nature from an inter-imperialist conflict to a genuine struggle for democracy against fascism. As one writer reasoned in the theoretical journal *Freedom*, 'the Soviet state is not an imperialist state; it is the first socialist state. A war fought by the Soviet Union is a just war, a progressive war, which must be supported by every section of the working class and by all oppressed peoples. Only people who deny that the Soviet Union is a socialist state and who refuse to accept the statement that a victory of the Soviet Union will be a mighty blow for the international working class can label the war as an imperialist struggle' (28).

After a short interval the CPSA declared its full support for the war and for the Smuts government's participation in it. It now took the view that the patriotic duty of workers was to increase production for the war effort; 'the war situation', the Central Committee declared, 'calls for the full and uninterrupted mobilisation of all labour reserves and that the working class as a whole is solid in its determination to take all the action necessary for the defeat of Hitlerism' (29). The party called for 'total war', by which it meant arming black soldiers, stopping inessential production on the gold mines and transferring it to war-related industry, putting an end to war-profiteering, the suppression of pro-German elements within afrikaner nationalism and most of all for 'all-out production for victory'. It suggested the creation of workers' production committees to 'increase output, safeguard the

workers' interests and prevent sabotage', in return for which it sought an improvement in the standard of living of black workers and the recognition of black trade unions in order to mobilise the human and material resources of South Africa behind the war effort. (30)

To the workers the party said that their fate depended on victory in the war. It called upon workers to try 'all ways of settling disputes with the bosses before calling strikes' and declared that strike action should be employed only as a last resort. It lobbied the government 'to remove the conditions that are driving workers into measures injurious to the war effort', saying that 'where sections of the working class resort to strike action, it is because conditions are forcing them to obtain relief from the crushing burden imposed upon them and no alternative means of gaining some improvement appear to be open to them'. It defined the role of the workers as being 'the driving force behind the whole-hearted war effort and its most vigilant guarantors. Their contribution is to bring about the greatest possible production of goods required for the war' (31). To the government the party said that 'the Communist Party is fully aware of strengthening the government in its war effort. Our criticisms of the government are positive, designed to awaken enthusiasm, obtain popular support and enable all forces to be utilised for victory'. In this spirit it chastised the government only for its failure to adopt a resolute policy, blaming those interests which 'desire victory but are not prepared to change the social and economic structure of South Africa in order to secure victory'. The CPSA

saw itself as the broker of the overriding national interest; 'the most determined and uncompromising fighter against fascism' (32).

The CPSA's strategy was to build a national front of all anti-fascist forces, 'which will force on the government the changes that are necessary'. The appeal went again to the white labour bureaucracy, the national liberation movement and the 'progressive' sections of capital. Excluded were 'the critics of our policy of supporting the war effort. They are the Fourth Internationalists, Trotskyists, the poisonous enemies of the Soviet Union ...who refuse to regard the Soviet Union as a socialist state' (33). Their external crime was criticism of Stalin, their internal crime was support for direct action by workers.

In its own terms the national front approach proved far more successful during the war than the popular front had been before, partly because the CPSA started the period with a base already constructed within the black labour movement in its previous 'anti-imperialist' period. With leading trotskyist organisers like Max Gordon immobilised by the state on account of their continued anti-war activities, the CPSA soon consolidated its influence over the black trade unions; of the fifteen-man committee initially chosen to develop the Mineworkers' Union eight were from the Party and with the detention of Gordon the party's control was secured. The Chairman of the union was a Communist, J B Marks, and Marks was to become Chairman of CNETU in 1945 in place of Makabeni. The Party was also able to recover its standing in the Trades and Labour

Council hierarchy on a common pro-war and anti-strike position. In the eyes of the government, the CPSA won a degree of respectability as the local representative of the Russian war-effort. The Minister of Justice became the patron of the Friends of the Soviet Union and Mrs Smuts became patron of Medical Aid to Russia, both Communist fronts. White Communists were elected as members of the Johannesburg and Cape Town city councils. The Party press was allowed extra newsprint and the circulation of its two newspapers, *Guardian* and *Inkululeko*, were said to reach a total of 67,000. (34)

Most significantly of all, the party was able to construct an alliance with the ANC on the basis of their common support for the war effort and common policy of subsuming mass action to legal lobbying. The ANC's own view on industrial action was illustrated by a letter sent by Dr Xuma, President General of the ANC, to General Smuts in 1942 just after the shooting of black municipal workers at Marabastad. He wrote:

We are alarmed at the number of avoidable strikes that have taken place recently. It also seems to us that the methods used to deal with some of the participants in these strikes are not calculated to improve the situation,.. The use of soldiers and armoured cars against unarmed strikers may be wrongly misconstrued by the rank and file of our people ... We deplore the occurrence of any strike at the present time, as we realise that they tend to impede the national war effort as well as to strain race relations between whites and blacks,.. We are anxious not to embarrass the government,.. We humbly and

respectfully request the Prime Minister to receive a deputation from the ANC and CNETU ... to assist you toward settlement of recent strikes and prevention of future strikes, (35)

From the CPSA's perspective its alliance with the ANC leadership was a crucial prop for its 'national front' policy and it allowed the party to win a definite influence within the Transvaal region of the ANC and on the ANC National Executive. In 1945 three leading Communists - Moses Kotane, J B Marks and Dan Thloome - were members of it and through men like Yusuf Dadoo the CPSA also won a strong position within the Indian Congress. From the ANC's perspective, its alliance with the CPSA facilitated its badly needed access to the african working class. In this convergence of interests was to be found the political force which above all determined the direction of the black labour movement.

The ANC

The route by which the ANC reached this position was of an entirely different nature from that taken by the CPSA. Prior to the 1940s, with the possible exception of two brief periods of radicalisation in the 1920s, the African National Congress had represented more or less exclusively the aspirations of the african middle classes. It was a liberal organisation, favouring the gradual extension of the suffrage to 'civilized' africans alone, fearful both of the blanket african from the reserves and the working class african in the towns, its methods limited to peaceful petitions and deputations (36). The social schism between the 'civilised' and 'blanket' african in the early days of this century

was caught well by Macah Kunene when he spoke on behalf of the peasant middle classes in 1905;

If the white people and the King were to desert us now... there is a great section of us who have approximated to... the white man's way of living... and there is a large number of us who have not advanced at all... I am afraid that those who have remained in their former state would kill us all, particularly civilised natives, because we have bought land, they do not approve of the ownership of lands. They know too that whenever there has been a war, against Natives like ourselves, we have always been with the government. (37)

By the mid-1930s the ANC was a terribly weak organisation. J B Marks of the Communist Party pronounced it 'literally dead' in 1935 and the question posed among ANC veterans was whether or not attempts should be made to resuscitate it.

The reason why the ANC was in such poor shape was not because its leaders were cowardly, as the CPSA had charged in its sectarian moments, but because the social base of the ANC had eroded beneath it. Its main source of support for the first twenty five years of its existence came from the relatively privileged stratum of independent african peasants. By the mid-1930s, however, particularly after the collapse of agricultural commodity prices in the Depression, the independent african peasantry was severely reduced in numbers and power. The ANC had received some support from the african aristocracy of chiefs and headmen, but with their absorption into the state administration the

ANC's Council of Chiefs, on which the hereditary aristocracy had an automatic right to sit, had no-one to fill its seats.

The third group from which the ANC drew support was the urban intelligentsia, in the main the children of the african peasantry, whose commitment to education allowed them to escape the fate awaiting the peasantry itself. They became ministers, clerks, teachers and civil servants; a few of the more privileged became doctors and lawyers; some entered precariously into small manufacture as blacksmiths, printers, wagon-builders and the like. More educated, worldly and strategically located in the centres of urban life, they were in the 1930s in the process of becoming the natural leaders of the african nationalist movement (38). They were however a small group only beginning to assert their political identity. No longer did they distance themselves entirely from the blanket and working class african, but they tended to see themselves as a mediation between the white ruler and the uneducated african. Dr Xuma revealed this attitude of mind when he wrote in 1930 that 'the educated African is our hope, our bridge... He should be brought into close contact and co-operation with the thinking European. He must be consulted in all matters affecting the African community. It is he and he alone who can best interpret the European to the African and the African to the European' (39).

At this time the ANC had little support outside a small middle class circle. Mahatma Gandhi caught an aspect of this problem when he told the

Rev SS Tema in 1939 that 'while most of your leaders are Christians, the vast mass of the Bantu are not Christians. You have adopted European dress and manners and have as a result become strangers in the midst of your own people. Politically that is a disadvantage. It makes it difficult for you to reach the heart of the masses' (40). African nationalism had to adapt or die and adaptation meant reaching out to the masses. This was the historic role of the urban african intelligentsia, whose own radicalism was born out of the indignities and frustration they suffered at the hands of white society, the yawning gap between the liberal ideals in which they were schooled and the racist realities of South African life and their hard battle to survive as a middle class against the competition of the white petty bourgeoisie.

The first tentative sign of the new radicalism in the ANC came in 1935-36, that is, before the revival of working class militancy, when the ANC participated in the All Africa Convention (AAC) to express its opposition to the Hertzog Bills. The bills further restricted the electoral and property rights of africans, undercutting liberal expectations of the gradual integration of educated africans into the body politic. The new radicalism reflected a growing belief that the ruling class was no longer interested in an accomodation with the african middle classes. Joining the AAC was a radical step for the ANC, since the AAC comprised coloureds as well as africans, communists and trotskyists as well as nationalists, and since it declared its uncompromising hostility to the government's attack on the black middle classes. On the other hand, the radicalism of the AAC was limited. The

method of protest it employed was still based on deputations to government affirming loyalty to the crown and on christian exhortation to prayer. The aspirations of the AAC were for a qualified franchise based on a 'civilisation test' of education and property. The AAC was not opposed to separate development in the social sphere and no effort was made in the direction of working class organisation. (41)

The willingness of the government to negotiate kept alive the hope of accomodation. As a substitute for the loss of suffrage by Cape africans, it conceded the formation of an advisory body for africans, the Native Representative Council (NRC), and created a separate voters' roll for propertied Cape africans which allowed them to elect three white Members of Parliament and two white Provincial Councillors. Additional land was promised for the reserves, though seemingly not delivered, and the powers of chiefs and headmen were reinforced. Legal rights to the purchase of land by africans were formalised, proving attractive to landowners who hoped that segregation would open the door to acquisition of more land. For the members of this class, segregation could be lived with as long as they had access to wealth and power within their own segregated areas. Although the AAC initially passed radical resolutions, including the call to boycott the NRC, a deal was struck and the NRC was not boycotted. The role of the AAC has been idealised by some of its participants, notably I B Tabata, the later founder of the Non-European Unity Movement, as the definitive political expression of the turn to mas militancy. It was not this but it was a tentative first step in a new direction. (42)

At the outset of World War Two, the annual conference of the ANC resolved that it would advise africans not to participate in the war until the government granted 'full democratic rights'. When the government promised to reform segregationism after the war was over, both the ANC and the AAC offered full support for the war effort. In the course of the war, the ANC responded in some measure to the new militancy coming from below. In *Africans' Claims*, its manifesto based on the Atlantic Charter, it called for 'the extension to all adults regardless of race of the right to vote' (43). This was a move in the direction of universal suffrage although still consistent with a non-racial property franchise and with a separate roll for africans. Formal authorisation was given to the establishment of the ANC Youth League and Women's League, but the radicalism of the former was kept in check under the paternalistic eye of Dr Xuma, while the Women's League was run by the wife of Dr Xuma with an emphasis on its 'tea-and-typing' functions. Women were allowed full membership of the ANC for the first time and the restriction on membership to persons 'belonging to the aboriginal races of Africa' was scrapped. Racial restrictions, however, were retained for officers of the ANC. The Upper House of Chiefs in the ANC government was formally abolished though it had long been defunct.

The ANC-CPSA alliance

The ANC leadership during the war was still a cautious and middle class political body, committed to a liberal-nationalist constitutionalism. This was the organisation whose alliance the Communist Party sought with

limited success in the 'popular front' period of 1935-39. The 'anti-imperialist' period of the CPSA disrupted this arrangement but between 1941 and the end of the war, for all their profound differences of origin and ideology, the ANC and CPSA were able to work together on a programme which might be summed up in shorthand as one of liberal-democratic reform and restraint.

Two key points emerge from this history. The first is that, contrary to most of the orthodox accounts, for much of the 1940s constitutionalism was just as much the preserve of the Communist Party as that of the Xuma leadership of the ANC. What has been called 'the pure class organisation and mobilisation of the proletariat', was not in fact on the agenda of the CPSA. Within the literature the defects of the politics of 'petitions and deputations' are often laid upon the shoulders of african nationalism alone, but this was not true. During the fateful years between 1941 and 1945 the CPSA was a crucial prop and active protagonist for this policy.

The second point concerns the direction of change in the ANC. Compared with its policies and practices in the 1930s the ANC had in fact moved a long way from a liberal elitism which almost entirely removed it from the masses toward a liberal democratic reformism which in its own way related to the mass of africans. For the young intelligentsia who formed the ANC Youth League, these advances in the leadership of african nationalism appeared totally inadequate. What was needed in their eyes

was a much firmer orientation to mass struggle and the capture of power. 'Return the land to the people' was the motif it offered in contrast to what was seen as the leadership's servile and illusory dependency on the false promises of liberalism. The role played by the Communist Party was to support the old leadership against this new radicalism. Not only did this act as a block on the political ascendance of the african radicals during the war, but it also cut the Communist Party off from influencing this powerful new force in a socialist direction. Indeed the CPUSA's policy during the war helped to identify socialism in the eyes of the members of the Youth League as essentially an obstacle to a more radical form of political leadership.

As the prospect of liberal reform visibly receded in the latter years of the war, the people's front policy entered very choppy waters. The CPSA responded to the growth of state repression with its own campaigns: the Anti-Pass Campaign of 1944, the League for Rights and Justice also in 1944, the People's Convention Campaign in 1945. These initiatives remained within the same liberal-democratic framework, an alternative to direct action by workers. The Anti-Pass campaign, for example, initiated by the CPSA and eventually supported by the ANC, organised its own successful demonstration in 1944 as a prelude to a petition of one million signatures calling for the end of the pass laws. At the same time in Alexandra the CPSA joined with the ANC in opposing calls from the left to extend the bus boycott to other towns and for CNETU to organise a general strike in support of the Alexandra residents. The anti-pass campaign foundered, the million signatures were never collected, the Prime Minister refused to see the leaders and when 5000 supporters demonstrated outside parliament they were arrested and fined. An attempt to revive the campaign in 1946 through the burning of passes and a one-day general strike was postponed indefinitely after the defeat of the miners.

Increasingly spurned by progressive capital and white labour and faced with a black labour movement in disarray, the CPSA was forced to turn increasingly to the third leg of its national front alliance, the ANC. Even the ANC, however, pressed by the rise of anti-communism within both its radical and conservative wings, began to distance itself at the end

of the war from its erstwhile ally in order to assert the prior claim of african nationalism over communism. A key moment was when Xuma addressed the CNETU conference of 1945 to stress the primacy of nation over class, arguing that 'no race that believes that salvation will come from outside its ranks or through outside leadership is worthy of man's estate. No race that expects others to think for it, that expects spoon-feeding by others, can deserve freedom'. Warning against 'chasing ideological theoretical party rainbows', Xuma declared that 'it is of less importance to us whether capitalism is smashed or not. It is of greater importance to us that while capitalism exists, we must fight and struggle to get our full share and benefit from the system' (44). Xuma's assertion of the hegemony of african nationalism over socialism was aimed immediately at the trotskyists rather than the CPSA but it served as a warning to the CPSA too that it had to recognise the primacy of african nationalism over Communism.

In the eyes of the radicals in the Youth League, the CPSA was seen as the main ally of the traditional ANC leadership and as having encouraged or been responsible for the policy of 'submissiveness'. The Youth League's own form of african nationalism, based on a doctrine of 'race-pride' for the african nation, left little room for a class politics which threatened to fragment the unity of the african nation and diminish its separate identity from the other nations said to inhabit South Africa. The Youth League at times displayed a passionate hostility to Communists who were presented as 'vendors of a foreign method... (whose) cut-and-dried formulae... only served to obscure the fundamental

fact that we are oppressed not as a class but as a People, as a Nation' (45), Mandela was one of the group which voted unsuccessfully for the expulsion of Communists from the ANC in 1944. Looking back to his younger days from the dock in 1964, he said:

I held the view that the policy of admitting Communists to the ANC and the close co-operation which existed at times on specific issues between the ANC and the Communist Party, would lead to a watering down of the concept of African nationalism. (46)

The Youth League's hostility to the CPSA, however, should not be understood merely as an opposition of nationalists to socialism but also as an opposition of radicals to those who were seen as the the prop of the old liberal democratic establishment.

Within the CPSA, the party's adherence to the national front policy in the latter years of the war, long after its ineffectiveness was revealed in practice, led to growing discontent. At the CPSA's 1945 conference, a Communist dissident by the name of George Findlay described the party's national convention campaign as a 'complete flop', commenting thus:

The 'progressive forces' are heartily sick of us ... Our line is a wash-out ... Our comrades tried desperately to argue away the facts ... 'People all happen to be busy on a Sunday' ... We cannot go on flogging a dead horse and then explain its inactivity by saying that we are not flogging hard enough ... The People's Convention is of course the tactic of the United Front, Dimitrovism. This is the tactic that has not succeeded in

South Africa. If the Party goes on united fronting... if it stresses its identity with other organisations... the party ceases to have any apparent reason for existence. If you want to have a United Front with the Labourites... why not dissolve your party and join theirs?... Then you will have unity! The logic of this position is so strong that in America we actually had Browder dissolving the Party, simply in order to stand cheering on Roosevelt's bandwagon... United Frontism miscarried into liquidationism... And very nearly the same thing has happened in South Africa... There is a world of a difference between fighting alliances and the sinking of differences which takes place in a United Front. (47)

'Browderism' had become a significant minority current in the CPSA. Earl Browder was the leader of the American Communist Party who at the behest of Moscow dissolved the the American Communist Party as a sign of its support for Roosevelt's new deal and the war effort. In the CPSA some individuals went down the same road of self-liquidation. 'Call me a Browderite', wrote one member, 'it won't be resented. If there exists a type of Marxism which requires us to weaken the war effort at this final and critical stage in order to uphold the sanctity of stale texts, then that type of "Marxism" must be discarded' (48). The Browderite tendency did not succeed in the CPSA but Findlay was right that it reflected in extreme form the political liquidationism which prevailed in the party more generally.

Findlay attacked the opportunism of the CPSA in embracing african nationalism simply because the other parts of the 'united front' were not willing to join, though he misconstrued its source as deriving from the entry of Labour Party members:

We have a Labour Party, opportunistic, gradualist and compromising enough, but hundreds who would like that well enough, are put off by the disgusting filth of its anti-kaffirism. And that is why we get a good many Labourites masquerading as Communists... A very little reflection will show that a united front tactic cannot avail against an internal fascist development... unless you want to collaborate with opportunistic labour elements who will readily betray you. There is no ground for collaboration. (49)

It was not, however, because labourites had entered the party unreconstructed that the CPSA supported 'united frontism', but rather it was because the CPSA embraced 'united frontism' that labourites were able to enter the party unreconstructed. The party line did not derive from the composition of the party, though the composition of the party was doubtless a crucial factor in the application of the line. Nonetheless Findlay offered a penetrating critique of the party from within, even if his solution was restricted to a return to study circles.

Within the terms of reference originally set out for the national front in 1941-42, the CPSA moved to the right in the course of the war. In 1942, for example, the CPSA had argued that 'the government for the sake

of the great mining interests sidetracks enormous productive resources and the labour power of 400,000 men for the production of a commodity like gold, which is practically valueless in the present war emergency' (50). Yet as we have seen, in the following years the CPSA sought to restrain industrial action in the gold mines and even in 1944-45, when industrial action in South Africa could hardly affect the outcome of the war, the CPSA sought to restrain calls for a national strike citing support for a second front in Europe. It was only in 1946 that the CPSA relaxed its opposition to industrial action and belatedly gave its support to the miners's strike of that year.

This was enough to alienate Dr Xuma who, according to J B Marks, 'just didn't show any interest' in directly confronting the government or in breaking from the war-time policy (51). It also incurred the wrath of the Smuts government, which erroneously blamed the strike on Communist agitators. Many leading members of the Communist Party - including Moses Kotane, Danie du Plessis, Yusuf Dadoo, Hilda Watts and Brian Bunting - were among the over fifty persons accused of conspiracy and infringement of War Measure 145 and convicted of the latter charge. There were police raids on the offices of the Communist Party, the *Guardian* and many of the trade unions. In November 1946 the authorities arrested the whole of the National Executive Committee of the CPSA under a charge of sedition, while the afrikaner Nationalist opposition attacked the government for being soft on communism, allowing for example a Communist, Sam Kahn, to become a Member of Parliament for Cape Western. As the cold war climate worsened, government reports invoked the spectre of Communist-inspired

subversion, one result of which was to confuse future historians over the actual historical role of the party. (52)

With fingers burnt from its turn to militancy in 1946, the CPSA seems quickly to have returned to its former approach under the slogan of a broad democratic front against the Nationalists. This was a confused time for the Communist Party, with dissent within its own ranks, new pressures coming from Moscow and the impending collapse of everything which it had built up during the war. The policy it adopted was to call for an electoral pact with the United Party and the Labour Party and a common front with the ANC and the Indian Congress, the aim being to 'keep the Nats out' and 'unite all sections of the people against the fascist menace'. The party was critical of the United Party for its failure to provide 'a clear-cut alternative to the fascist aspirations of the Nationalists', but called on voters to 'deal a death blow to the Malanazis' by voting United Party wherever the CPSA and the Labour Party were not standing candidates. It called for 'the return to power of a government under which it is possible to work for progress and democratic advance', which meant in effect the United Party, and to include within the broad democratic front 'every South African who is not in the Nationalist Party' (53).

By now, however, the people's front policy had almost entirely lost its purchase on reality. It made good sense to prioritise the electoral defeat of the Nationalists and therefore the electoral victory of the

United Party, but the reconstruction of a broad democratic front was a chimera. Desperate times called for far more radical measures. The CPSA appealed again to the progressive wing of capital on the grounds that the Nationalists would 'sacrifice its profits to appease their god of race and colour' (54). Imagining the United Party as the political expression of progressive capital, torn between the conflicting aims of preserving white domination and of increasing profits by removing the colour bar from industry, the party drew the 'obvious conclusion' that its task was to transform this section into active adherents of the struggle against the colour bar. Within the ranks of the United Party itself, however, the liberal wing under Leo Marquard had given up any hope of reforming it and was taking steps to form a new and independent liberal party. The leadership of the United Party was far more interested in outdoing the Nationalists in anti-Communist and segregationist fervour than in joining a broad democratic front with the Communists. A symptom of the times was the Communist Party's lack of interest in black trade unionism, indicated by the number of its trade union organisers who moved to politics.

In its relation to the ANC, the Communist Party chased the shadow of the Xuma leadership even as from within the ANC itself disillusionment was setting in and far more radical voices coming to the fore. One of the leaders of the Youth League, A P Mda, was writing about 'creating a revolutionary national front' at the same time as the CPSA was still holding onto its alliance with Xuma (55). The situation was not helped for the Communist Party by the fact that Xuma himself was mobilising in opposition to Communist Party influence within the ANC.

For the ANC leadership the post-war years were ones of profound disillusionment. The Rev Calata wrote to Xuma in 1946 saying that General Smuts 'has disappointed us... because he must have known that we looked to him to give us freedom' (56). Z K Matthews lamented a year later the tragic weakness of South African liberalism and Dr Moroka deprecated the government's post-war policy of fascism which he described as the antithesis of the Atlantic Charter (57). The crisis of confidence manifested itself most sharply in the ANC's attitude to the Native Representative Council. The Youth League called for a boycott of the NRC and all other 'dummy institutions' of this segregationist type, as a first step toward turning to mass struggle and away from dependency on the government. Within the ANC leadership too there was growing frustration with the failure of the NRC to influence government policy and the government's failure to honour its 'solemn pledge' to consult the NRC. In 1944 the NRC complained about the government's failure to purchase more land for the reserves and about lack of freehold tenure for africans in the

urban areas. Relations got worse when the NRC was largely ignored over the 1945 Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act which tightened up influx controls and when the government did nothing to reform the pass laws, grant recognition to african trade unions or provide for african representation in local government.

In June 1946 Xuma initiated a move for the suspension of the NRC in protest at the government's rejection of the anti-pass petition. The final straw in this 'breach of faith to the African people' came with the suppression of the miners' strike, which coincided with the 1946 meeting of the NRC (58). The government ignored NRC calls for the withdrawal of the use of force and for negotiations or arbitration. Pushed from within by its own Youth League to boycott the NRC, the ANC passed a compromise resolution calling for the council's temporary adjournment. Smuts tried to rescue the situation by meeting members of the NRC, including three elected ANC representatives, and offered the prospect of the NRC being given more authority in the reserves some time in the future. Smuts wanted to give the NRC what he termed 'a bone to chew at' and stressed the common interest which bound all the people of South Africa together. 'It is our country', he said, 'it is your country... We are all together in one society... You cannot have good government in the country and ignore the opinion of the mass of the people in it... This young child, South Africa, is growing up and the old clothes do not fit the growing boy' (59). And so the platitudes poured out.

Mosaka summed up the growing dismay of the ANC leadership when he said that during the war the government

did a good deal to create a new hope and faith in the mood of the African people. We felt that new forces were at work as industry swept throughout the country... causing the movement of people from one place to another. Throughout the late stages of the war a lot of legislation was passed which made things more and more intolerable for us. We would like a new policy to be outlined which will give us hope and make for a better foundation for the future. (60)

Even Xuma described Smuts' response as vague and disappointing and called for a further suspension of the NRC, concerned that 'the African worker has become bitter and sullen' and might threaten to undermine the ideals of 'democracy, christianity and human decency' (61). The issue was finally resolved by the ANC, with the support of the Communist Party, deciding in favour of contesting the NRC elections to be held in March 1948. Smuts, however, refused to reconvene the adjourned NRC and it was not long before the new Nationalist government resolved the boycott debate in its own fashion by disbanding the NRC from above. For the black working class, the boycott debate was mainly a side-show, becoming the main act of african politics late in 1946 only because the workers themselves had been forced to the back of the political stage. From this standpoint, the main issue confronting the political leadership was not whether or not to boycott the NRC, itself a dying institution, but rather whether and when and how it was to turn to the masses themselves.

Assessing the people's front

The first point is that the people's front led the black working class and the liberation movement more generally to defeat in the 1940s. This is not to say that some other more radical policy would have succeeded where the people's front failed, but it is to say that we need to engage with the reality of its failure. The liberal-democratic paradigm in which the CPSA-ANC alliance was framed pre-supposed that the rulers of South Africa were ready to reach an accommodation with the black working class and that the black working class had the social weight to force an accommodation on the rulers. On both counts the policy was mistaken. The state turned against consensual politics, directing its fire instead to extinguishing the threat posed by black workers, while black workers themselves lacked the power to resist the attacks mounted on them. When the militant wing of black labour responded through the language of direct action, their struggles also lacked the support of the trade union and political leadership. The balance of forces between labour and capital was such that they may well have ended in defeat whatever their leadership, but they were certainly weakened and demoralised by the leadership they had. The leadership failed to support workers in their illegal struggles and failed to win them benefits through their own constitutional methods. The rewards for restraint failed to materialise. Instead the resolve of the labour movement was undermined from within as the sjambok landed on the backs of the workers from without.

The weaknesses of the people's front policy were well rehearsed at the time by all sections of the left opposition. We shall turn to their critiques in

the next section, but here we must ask why the Communist Party held onto this perspective long after its problems had been revealed in practice. In its original form the people's front policy made sense in its own terms; to support the war against nazism whatever qualms were held about the forces of 'democracy'; to adopt a strategy of gradual democratisation since there was both theoretical and practical evidence that the tensions between segregation and industrialisation were leading to liberal solutions by sections of the bourgeoisie; to advocate restraint by black workers since industrial action carried with it great risks for a young and relatively weak labour movement and since direct action might frighten off the reforming wing of the state. It was for good reason that many militants were at first attracted to this consensual scenario.

We said earlier, however, that we are not addressing a people's front *sui generis* but a people's front of the Communist Party, determined by stimuli from the Soviet Union which had little to do with the struggle inside South Africa. This is important because it meant that until the line changed from Moscow, the CPSA could not learn from experience or at least could not apply the lessons which it learnt from experience. So when the evidence was presented in visible and concrete form that the people's front policy was not working, the leadership had both to persist and develop a frame of mind to justify the unjustifiable, to turn failures into successes and to discredit criticism and critics. For the future of South African socialism this was the real defeat.

Chapter 4

Labour and Politics: The Left Opposition

Through the 1940s there were political currents on the left critical of what appeared to them as the knavish attitude of self-restraint characteristic of the leadership of the people's front. Advocating mass action rather than constitutional pressure and the capture of power rather than liberal reform, the critiques mounted by the left opposition came to a head in 1943-44 with the formation of the Youth League in the ANC, the Progressive Trade Union Group in CNETU, the Workers International League in trotskyist circles and the Non-European Unity Movement as an alternative axis of black nationalism. Less important was also the formation of the African Democratic Party reflecting the experience of community activism. As a whole the left opposition sought to give political expression to what we might call the heroic wing of the movement but its component parts were deeply divided over their diagnosis of the problem and prognosis of what was to be done.

The trotskyist movement

Within the black unions the main opposition to the CPISA-ANC leadership came from trotskyists in the Workers' International League (WIL) and other militants in the Progressive Trade Union Group (PTU). We have seen

that trotskyists were deeply involved in the formation and development of the black trade union movement; they initiated its recovery in the late 1930s and formed the nucleus of the left wing in the black trade union movement during the war. Dan Koza led the African Commercial and Distributive Workers' Union, one of the most combatative and best organised unions on the Rand. In 1944 trotskyists from the newly-formed Workers' International League (WIL) joined with Koza in building the PTU as a left wing caucus within CNETU and calling for a new leadership in CNETU.

The WIL-PTU offered a trenchant critique of the policies of CNETU and the Communist Party. Its general position may be illustrated by the following statement issued in 1945 by the Provisional Committee of Militant Trade Unions in its critique of class collaborationism:

As the 'war for democracy' becomes more and more markedly what it always was, namely an imperialist war for world domination by the imperial powers, and the imperialists in the allied camp show that they are treating the peoples of Greece, Italy, France, Belgium and occupied Germany just as savagely as the Nazis did, so the rulers of South Africa come out more and more openly as the subjugators of toilers... Gone are the fine phrases of Smuts... Instead he comes out openly with the doctrine of preserving 'white supremacy. (1)

What was needed, it was argued, was strong leadership

to lead struggles against the bosses... who will not sell out the workers, not compromise its principles ... not go down on

its knees begging... We must expose the present leaders who hobnob with the bosses and the government... crawl to the peaceful bargaining of the Campaign for Rights and Justice... beg scraps from the Minister of Labour... But when they have to deal with the progressive opposition to their spineless policies they come down with force and decision. (2)

The roots of the problem were traced to stalinism:

ever since Russia entered the war in 1941, stalinism has damped down any militant action on the part of the workers, has played the role of strike-breaker. (3)

The starting point of the trotskyist critique of stalinism lay in a far more realistic appraisal of the tyrannical nature of the Soviet state and of the policies which that state enjoined for Communist Parties internationally.

The question arises as to why the trotskyists proved unable to consolidate and extend their influence within the labour movement. There were many external factors at work here; it was no easy matter to confront at the same time a ruthless state and the opposition of the leadership of the liberation movement on the basis of the relatively undeveloped social forces available to the working class. The trotskyists' loss of mass resonance was by itself no proof of error but there were major internal deficiencies in the alternatives which it put forward. Although the trotskyist critique of stalinism was more profound and consistent than the other currents which broke from the stalinist monolith, in South Africa trotskyism never fully emancipated itself from

its origins and remained to a greater or lesser extent parasitic on that which it most fervently opposed,

Communists did not have a monopoly on soft-peddling and legalistic trade unionism. Some of the members of the PTU itself were not immune to these pressures; for example, one of its number, A Segwai, was exposed for corruption (4) and another, C. Phoffu, was attacked in *Socialist Action*, the paper of the WIL, for his 'weak and cowardly leadership' of the wood workers strike of 1945 (5). The key political issues, however, relating the Communists and the trotskyists were more fundamental, relating in particular to the question of the war. In spite of its subjective intentions, the practical effect of the anti-war stance taken by the South African trotskyists was a form of political indifferentism; the reduction of fascism and social democracy to two parallel wings of imperialism between which there was little to choose. The trotskyists were of course for the defeat of Hitler but there was a certain parochialism in the view that black workers should concern themselves only with their immediate economic struggles while the war was burning outside and millions were being murdered in the concentration camps. There was a certain gap in logic to say that the best and only way to fight Hitlerism abroad was to concentrate exclusively on the war at home.

The trotskyist response to the war negated rather than transcended that of the CPSA; when the CPSA declared that support for the war against

fascism meant no strikes, the South African trotskyists replied that support for strikes meant no support for the war against fascism. Some liberation movements in occupied Europe showed that it was possible for millions of workers to find a way both to wage war on Hitler's armies and at the same time to fight their own national and often very reactionary bourgeoisies; to fight in other words on two fronts. This is not to idealise the liberation movements in Europe but simply to affirm the possibility of uniting the internal and external dimensions of the class struggle. For the trotskyists in South Africa, the fight against fascism abroad and the fight against segregationism at home were artificially counterposed, just as they were also counterposed in reverse fashion by the CPSA after 1941. For the CPSA, a united front to fight Hitlerism entailed that the working class capitulate to bourgeois liberalism. For the trotskyists, if the working class were not to capitulate to bourgeois liberalism, this demanded that it had to withdraw from the war against Hitler.

The PTU-WIL responded to what it perceived as the class treachery of the Communist Party leadership with calls for more militancy and no compromise within the trade union movement. The advocacy of militant trade unionism, however, was combined with abstract socialist propaganda without forging a viable link between them. The key problem was a failure to integrate the democratic aspect of the struggle with the economic struggle for socialism. The PTU agreed that the workers' immediate struggle was for democracy; 'the dynamism of our struggle', it wrote, 'is clearly seen to be the struggle of 8 million people for their

democratic rights' (6). At the same time it reduced the question of democracy to that of socialism, arguing that short of socialism there could be no movement toward democracy; 'the only conceivable democracy will be the workers' democracy'. Revolution was counterposed to the fight for immediate reforms; 'the days of concession to the proletariat are over, . . . no single item can be fought without fighting them all' (7). Its justification was based on a formalistic schema according to which industrialisation was deemed impossible without the end of institutionalised racism, the end of institutionalised racism was impossible without land reform and land reform was impossible without socialism. *Ergo* the condition of industrialisation was democracy and the condition of democracy was socialism; 'without the redivision of the land, the pre-requisite of an internal market, and abolition of the colour bar, industrialisation cannot occur. Only under socialism can this be achieved' (8). This view was to prove badly mistaken. It rested on the collapse of the democratic aspect of the struggle into the socialist, based on an idealised view of the revolutionary potential of the black working class.

The WIL fiercely rejected the CPSA's policy of 'subordinating mass struggle to that of the capitalists under the pretext that we must not antagonise political friends', but in response it tended to eschew all alliances, treating the workers as 'the one force capable of compelling the fulfilment of democratic aims' (9). In opposition to the Communist Party's liberal-democratic approach to reform, the WIL's tendency was to present the achievement of socialism as the pre-condition of any reform,

turning the idea of 'permanent revolution' into a kind of ultimatum, according to which nothing was possible prior to socialism and socialism made all things possible. This form of political propaganda was combined with appeals for militancy on the trade union and community fronts but could not have been of much help to those WIL activists involved in trade union and community organisation, for whom the immediate practical question was not the capture of power but the survival of the young and vulnerable labour movement.

The WIL emphasised the building of a genuinely revolutionary party as an alternative to the CPSA, but the revolutionary consciousness which it ascribed to the masses was largely a projection of the party itself with little relation to the actual array of class forces in South Africa. The tasks facing the weak and divided working class movement in the 1940s were momentous enough: to establish its own organisation and independence, to carve out for itself a space in society and to win political recognition from the state. The revolutionary syndicalism espoused by the WIL represented the most concerted and determined attempt in the 1940s to reorient the black labour movement on class struggle lines, but politically it substituted the image of the October revolution for a concrete delineation of the democratic tasks ahead.

If one pole of trotskyism was to subordinate democracy to socialism, the opposite pole was to subordinate socialism to democracy in the form of a radical black nationalism organised under the umbrella of the Non-

European Unity Movement. The problems faced by the WIL-PTU in defining a socialist politics were not made easier by the more general climate of nationalism which had come to predominate among South African trotskyists at the time. Just as the Communist Party in the 1940s increasingly turned to the african nationalism of the ANC, so too the mainstreams of the trotskyist movement also turned to nationalism in the shape of the NEUM. At first sight this convergence of both ends of the socialist spectrum toward one or other kind of black nationalism would seem to indicate the recognition of necessity in South African society of mediating class politics through a nationalist lense. This was not the case. For the trotskyist movement no less than for the Communist Party, the abandonment of the attempt to construct an independent class politics in favour of black nationalism was not a product of the imperatives of the racial social structure in South Africa but rather of the failure of the actually existing socialist movements to construct a coherent socialist opposition to racialism. For the trotskyists the journey from revolutionary socialism to nationalism followed a different road from that of the Communist Party - in their case rooted in their specific interpretation of the theory of permanent revolution rather than in the exigencies of general policies centered around the defence of the Soviet Union - but the roads were parallel.

In 1934 the Cape Town-based Lenin Club, the fount of South African trotskyism, divided into two main political organisations: the Workers Party of South Africa (WPSA) and the Fourth International Organisation of South Africa (FIOSA). Despite differences over the role of afrikaner

nationalism, they shared a common opposition to the CPUSA's slogan of the 'Native Republic' for its 'subordinating the class struggle to the national struggle ... ignoring the white workers,... and excluding the possibility of a united revolutionary working class'. While rejecting the Labour Party's racist vision of South Africa as 'a white man's country', the Workers Party declared that the CPUSA's 'Native Republic' slogan 'flows from the equally false assumption that South Africa is exclusively a black man's country ... bound to antagonise one section of the working class against another'. FIOSA for its part declared that the 'Native Republic' slogan 'can do nothing but harm. Its immediate effect would be to split the working class... It will repel large numbers of militant white workers ... A revolution which does not include the white workers as well as the black is doomed to failure' (10).

The Workers Party approach to nationalism was opposed by Trotsky, who wrote in reply in 1935:

The proletarian party should... take the solution of the national (racial) question in its own hands... When the theses say that the slogan of a 'black republic' is equally harmful for the revolutionary cause as is the slogan of a 'South Africa for the whites', then we cannot agree... In the latter there is the case of supporting complete oppression, in the former there is the case of taking the first steps toward liberation... The proletarian revolutionaries must never forget the right of the oppressed nationalities to self-determination. (11)

The Workers Party rapidly shifted ground. By 1936 it pointed to the

centrality of the 'native problem', locating it as an 'agrarian' problem: 'this agrarian question... is the alpha and omega of the revolution' (12). It argued that the enormity of the land problem, with the white 10% of the population owning close to 90% of the land, meant that only socialist revolution could solve it. At a time when black urban workers were beginning to discover their collective identity and demand recognition of it, the Workers Party turned its face to the land and in its mind metamorphosed the black working class (both in the towns and on the white-owned farms) into 'landless peasants'. Since it now saw no possibility of socialism emerging from white workers because of their racism or from black workers because they were really landless peasants, the Workers Party thereupon adopted a two stage theory, the first stage of which was the national struggle for land re-distribution to the african peasantry, while socialist forms of struggle were relegated to a second stage sometime in the future.

The third-world nationalism into which the Workers Party had assimilated was evident in the international contributions of its newspaper, *The Spark* (13). One vivid example of this may be taken from its writings on the Palestine question. In 1939 it wrote that the demands of the arab nationalist movement were 'very modest'; that all further immigration by jews should be stopped, that further sale of arab land to jews should be prohibited and that an arab national government should be set up. The problem as *Spark* saw it was that as long as the arab nationalist movement was led by the 'treacherous' arab bourgeoisie and clergy 'it will terminate in foul compromise' with zionism. In fact this anti-

semitic landowning class, which had led the pogroms against the jews and was at the time armed by Mussolini, was being supported by the Palestinian Communist Party. What was needed in *Spark's* eyes was a more resolute arab nationalist leadership ready to fight harder against jewish immigration into Palestine and jewish occupation of Palestinian land.

Spark put forward a mix of abstract socialism and nationalism. On the one side, jewish nationalism or zionism was described by *Spark* as the 'direct product' and 'playball' of British imperialism. It was trying to 'cash in on the sufferings of persecuted jews in Europe' for whom there was 'no special remedy except advance in union with the working class along the revolutionary road,.. The solution to the jewish problem lies in socialism' (14). On the other hand, *Spark* saw it as the duty of marxists to take 'a clear, unambiguous stand in support of the colonial people in their struggle against imperialism', that is, arab nationalism. What this meant in particular was a call for marxists to oppose any and all jewish immigration into Palestine. The problem with the Palestine Communist Party, as *Spark* saw it, was that it was ready to compromise and allow some jewish immigration. In general *Spark* declared that it was in favour of 'complete freedom of movement as part of our democratic rights', but 'jewish immigration into Palestine is something entirely different' since zionists sought to use jewish immigration as a lever to win a majority.

It is an interesting comment on how differently the international trotskyist movement viewed the matter that when Spark published its views in *The New International*, the journal of the American Socialist Workers Party, it was met with a volley of criticism from trotskyists seeking an independent class position rather than a submersion into arab nationalism (15). L. Rock, for example, wrote from Palestine that Spark committed a 'grave error' in speaking 'with great satisfaction and enthusiasm of Arabian national unity' given the racist and reactionary nature of its leadership. The jewish population and zionism could not be identified; 'we must win the toiling jewish masses for the anti-imperialist struggle... any struggle against jewish immigration would only strengthen Zionist chauvinism among the Jewish masses... The complete victory of the movement for independence in Palestine is impossible without the support of the Jewish toilers... The liberation movement will not receive this support so long as anti-Jewish terror exists and so long as the Arabian toiling masses will struggle against Jewish immigration' (16). Other contributors looked to different solutions to the national divisions between arabs and jews, for example, to the establishment of two separate states as the most democratic solution possible under the circumstances. What they shared in common was a rejection of what Rock called 'Arabian defensive chauvinism' as an answer to 'Jewish aggressive chauvinism'.

Returning to South Africa, in that same year of 1939 the Workers Party formally dissolved itself and closed *The Spark*, claiming that open, legal organisation would no longer be possible during the war. It argued

that 'the workers movement faces a new road... It is necessary to cease publication of *Spark* rather than to submit to the enemy' (17). In its own terms this was a premature response to a future threat, which saved the state the trouble of closing the paper down. The formal organisational dissolution of the Workers Party (which apparently continued to exist in secret but without a public voice) mirrored its political dissolution of socialism into nationalism. The two-stage theory evaporated into a no-stage theory when the secret Workers Party played a vital role in forming the Non-European Unity Movement in 1943. The national question was re-defined; away from a class struggle for land re-distribution to the winning of political democracy as a pre-condition for state-directed land reform. Land reform itself was increasingly conceived in terms of the extension of private ownership. Socialism was pushed off the agenda altogether as Non-European Unity against the 'herrenvolk' (whites) was counterposed to working class organisation and as the Unity Movement's 'minimum programme' of democratic demands was abstracted from any hint of a maximal programme.

The practical expression of the Workers Party's political drift from socialism to nationalism was that it played little part as an organisation in the development of the trade union movement after 1936. It had taken to heart one aspect of Trotsky's critique, his emphasis on socialists fighting against national oppression but missed Trotsky's socialist approach to the question when he wrote:

The proletarian party can and must solve the national problem by its own methods. The historical weapon of national liberation

can only be the class struggle... The Comintern transformed the programme of national liberation into an empty democratic abstraction that is elevated above the reality of class relations. In the struggle against national oppression, different classes liberate themselves (temporarily) from material interests and become simply 'anti-imperialist' forces. In order that these spiritual 'forces' bravely fulfil the task assigned to them by the Comintern, they are promised as a reward a spiritual 'national-democratic' state... The policy of Lenin in regard to the oppressed nations did not... have anything to do with the epigones. The Bolshevik Party defended the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination with the methods of proletarian class struggle, entirely rejecting the charlatan 'anti-imperialist' blocs with the numerous petty bourgeois 'national' parties of czarist Russia. (18)

The formation of the Unity Movement represented precisely the 'anti-imperialist' bloc with numerous petty bourgeois 'national' parties that Trotsky warned against.

FIOSA, the other major trotskyist grouping, rejected the idea that social revolution in South Africa could be achieved through isolating the 'so-called peasant struggle for land from the fight which confronts the proletarian, especially the non-white proletarian, in the cities and farms' (19). It rejected the practical conclusion of the Workers Party programme, that it 'lays little stress on trade union rights, wage questions, on labour conditions, etc'. FIOSA held to the notion of a

socialist movement centered around the unity of black workers, but treated working class organisation more as an abstraction than an immediate practice. Hosea Jaffe expressed this spirit of abstentionism in his critical comments about the WIL in 1945: 'what right', he asked, ' had WIL to go to the masses before having discussed and decided a programme?'. The problem with the WIL, as he saw it, was that it 'plunged into work' (20)! This was the same attitude of purism which had left Max Gordon politically isolated when he too 'plunged into work' without having decided a programme. FIOSA too, however, was also drawn into the Non-European Unity Movement.

The political magnet of Non-European Unity against the 'herrenvolk' also attracted the WIL-PTU militants. They moved toward a generally uncritical support of the Unity Movement, describing it as a 'determined and solid organisation which strives to unite the three oppressed groups of the Non-Europeans in an unbreakable united front' (21). Its real effect, however, was not only to cut the militants off from white workers, treated as just another part of the 'Herrenvolk', but also to draw them into the explicitly non-socialist politics of non-european nationalism. The WIL's search for a political home with other trotskysts in the Unity Movement undermined its most positive aspect, an orientation to working class action and organisation. The WIL itself fell apart when one section demanded a withdrawal from trade union work into study groups, a logical outcome of the abstentionist politics rife in the Unity Movement. The historian Baruch Hirson was among the small group who tried unsuccessfully to resist this self-disintegration. The

WIL acquired the Unity Movement's ultimatum attitude to other groups, demanding ANC entry into the AAC as a condition for common action and saying to internal critics of the CPSA like Findlay that 'the only way CP militants can show that they are sincere is to join the Unity Movement' (22).

The two poles of the South African trotskyist movement, the syndicalist and the radical nationalist, were reflected in the two sides of its rendition of the theory of permanent revolution. Either the race question was subsumed beneath the workers' struggle for socialism or *vice versa*. In the latter case trotskyists could, if they wished, make their peace with the non-socialist programme of the nationalist movement on the understanding that, since South African capitalism could not survive without racism, the process of history would by its own devices transform national liberation into socialism regardless of the consciousness of the masses. From this premise, the point was to perfect nationalism and not to transcend it (23). In its vacillations between 'pure socialism' and radical black nationalism, the trotskyist movement in its entirety - though with differing degrees of enthusiasm and longevity - landed on the nationalist terrain of the Unity Movement.

If we can speak of the South African trotskyist movement as a whole, its major defect lay in its parasitism on what it most fervently opposed: the politics of stalinism. Many of its members were schooled in politics by the Communist Party and were drawn to trotskyism by quite different

reactions against stalinism: some against the 'native republic' period of sectarianism and others against the turn to popular frontism. As a result trotskyism grew up without a coherent centre, its tendency being to react to stalinism rather than to transcend it. When the CPSA espoused the 'Native Republic', trotskyism countered with the need for class unity. When the CPSA turned to a popular front of all progressive forces, black and white, trotskyism turned its back on white workers. When the CPSA turned to urban movements, one wing of trotskyism turned to the land. When the CPSA lobbied for support from the liberal bourgeoisie, trotskyism turned anti-liberalism into a credo. When the CPSA was pro-war, trotskyism was anti-war. When the CPSA opposed strike action in favour of legal trade unionism, one wing of trotskyism idealised strike action as the alpha and omega of revolutionary politics and the other wing rejected trade unionism *in toto* as inherently reformist. Anti-stalinism was the negative starting point of South African trotskyists but no substitute for a socialist alternative.

The Non-European Unity Movement

The formation of the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) in 1943 represented a bloc of nationalist organisations - notably the All Africa Convention (AAC), the African People's Organisation, the Transkei Organised Bodies (a loose federation of chiefs, welfare organisations, women's organisations, and voters' associations set up to fight for civil rights and against the so-called 'rehabilitation schemes' in the Transkei), the Anti-CAD movement (an organisation set up to oppose the establishment of the segregationist Coloured Affairs Department in 1943) and the trotskyist groups.

The NEUM offered a compelling indictment of the 'knavish' attitude of the old liberal-democratic leadership of the liberation movement, symbolised by their support for the war effort and their reliance on the empty promises of the liberal bourgeoisie. Thus I B Tabata, a founding member of the Unity Movement and former member of the Workers Party, criticised the leadership's perspective with great force in 1943:

We have been fooling around with dummies, with meaningless mock-elections and mock councils... Great promises were given us. The poll tax was to be investigated and the gaoling of defaulters was to be stopped. The pass system, which was later to be abolished altogether, was to be relaxed immediately... Our trade unions were to be recognised by law... The Prime Minister and the Secretary for Native Affairs, Mr Smit, publicly acknowledged

that the segregation policy had failed and they promised a New Deal for Africans. That was a time of great promises by the Rulers and of great hopes for the Non-Europeans... But we were bound to be disappointed more bitterly than before. As soon as the enemy was thrown out of Africa, all talk of these promises ceased altogether; but even before then it became obvious that they were empty promises never to be fulfilled. Tens of thousands of our people are still being imprisoned for their inability to pay the heavy tax... The pass system is today as vicious, tyrannical and humiliating as it ever was. Thousands have been rounded up in the Rand alone. Today General Smuts no longer says that segregation has failed... The African trade unions are still illegal... African workers were shot when they ventured to strike... This, then, is our reward for loyalty to the country, for our great war effort... We get promises, commissions of enquiry, inter-departmental commissions, wage commissions, and it all ends with white-washing the culprits and condemning the victims. (24)

Here was a sharp snapshot of the problem. Tabata's solution was to focus on what he saw as a crisis of leadership. He advocated a doctrinaire policy of 'non-collaboration' with the state's segregationist institutions of representation, especially the NRC, to purge the movement of the 'meek, humiliating language' of the Native Representatives. 'Non-collaboration' was presented as a kind of rite of self-purification, the means by which the nationalist leadership would cleanse itself of all liberal taints. The doctrine was predicated on an idealised view of mass militancy held back only by a treacherous

leadership. Non-collaborationism as a programme was the practical expression of betrayal theory as a generic tool of analysis.

As early as 1941, when Tabata reflected on 'six years of disappointments and failures, setbacks and outright defeats', he traced their cause entirely to betrayals of leadership. The logic of this position was that if the leadership were cleansed, the masses would look after themselves:

The fault was not with masses. Wherever it was in their power they gave unmistakeable proof of their militancy... They made it unmistakeably clear that the time when the rulers could bluff them with promises is over... The masses will have nothing to do with the war, because they know by experience what this democracy is, for which South Africa is fighting.. It is not the masses who can be blamed for these six years of defeats, but the leaders. Whenever anything depended on the spontaneous action of the masses, it was all right. Whenever anything depended on the 'wise' deliberation of the leaders, it was all wrong. (25)

The idea of 'collaboration' in this theory was a fusion of two quite distinct ideas: one referring to political independence from the rulers and the other to the boycott of state institutions. The assumption was that if the movement was non-collaborationist in the second sense, that is, if it boycotted the NRC and parallel bodies, then it would also be non-collaborationist in the sense of developing an independent and militant political programme. The idea that the NEUM could buy itself political independence by cutting itself off from any contact with the

state was entirely false. Political autarchy of this sort was a recipe only for sectarianism.

In its application of betrayal theory, the principal task facing the NEUM appeared not so much that of working class organisation or education or even mobilisation but simply that of removing the barriers to mass militancy constructed by the 'collaborators'. The exorcism of collaboration from the leadership went along with a formal and passive orientation to the mass, the tendency being to extol its militancy rather than participate in its development. Thus the NEUM was consistently opposed to any involvement in trade union organisation or other 'partial' struggles, since this was not the job of a national movement. The major exception to this abstentionist rule was among some NEUM militants in the Transkei who participated in the rural struggles of reservists. The NEUM's overall abstentionism as far as working class organisation was concerned was easy prey for ANC and CPSA critics. More importantly, 'non-collaborationism' was not a principle which workers could possibly observe, since 'collaboration' with their employers at the point of the production of surplus value was the essential starting-point of their working lives and no trade union except the most extreme syndicalists could forego some kind of participation in negotiating forums with the employers. 'Non-collaborationism' came to mean a sectarian refusal not only to participate in state institutions but to co-operate with all those perceived as 'liberals'.

The practical proof that sectarianism was no guarantee of political independence was provided in the NEUM's Ten-Point Programme, which itself offered a liberal discourse of universal franchise, equal rights, freedom of speech and movement, individual privacy and compulsory, free and uniform education. Beyond its commitment to state education, its social clauses were limited to vague clauses on the 'revision' of the land question, the civil and criminal code, the system of taxation and labour legislation (26). The NEUM's denunciations of liberalism were not accompanied by its programmatic transcendence. The set of 'minimum demands' articulated in the NEUM's Ten Point Programme was nevertheless treated as an absolute ultimatum, the acceptance of which *in toto* was presented as the condition for any alliance or common action with other political organisations or individuals. In the absence of a maximum programme, the language of the 'minimum programme' was little more than a sop to socialists in the movement or a hangover from a marxist past,

The two issues which proved decisive in scuppering the unity talks between the Unity Movement and the ANC in 1948 were first the definition of the oppressed nation and second the organisational structure of the national movement. The NEUM counterposed non-european nationalism to what it saw as the racist assumptions behind african nationalism, non-european unity being seen not just as a useful strategy but as an essential political principle. The basic argument was spelt out in the preamble to the 1943 10-Point Programme:

Division, strife and suspicion amongst the Non-European groups themselves are artificially fostered by the ruling class... No

effective fight against segregation is possible by people who tacitly accept segregation amongst themselves... The acceptance of segregation... serves only the interests of the oppressors... Our fight against segregation must be directed against the segregationists within as well as without... The unity of all Non-European groups is a necessary pre-condition for this total fight against segregation. (27)

In its critique of segregationist tendencies within african and indian nationalisms, however, the NEUM failed to overcome the same problem in its own body. Its formal policy was that 'the Unity Movement cannot and must not... be considered as directed against the Europeans' (28), but in practice there was a marked tendency to designate whites in general as the 'Herrenvolk' enemy and liberal whites as 'in reality only the instruments of the ruling class'. Furthermore, the narrow racial character of the NEUM's member organisations - in particular, the coloured anti-CAD and the african AAC - was left entirely intact in its federal form of organisation. In all these ways, the Unity Movement's own brand of non-european nationalism replicated rather than transcended the segregationist consciousness attributed to african nationalism.

Although the ANC and the AAC were progammatically akin to one another and the Unity Movement was critical of the political record of both organisations, its response was to idealise the organisational form of the AAC and repudiate that of the Congress. Tabata treated the AAC as the ideal expression of national consciousness and the ANC as an instrument sent by the oppressors to 'sew dissension'. The crucial

distinction between them was said to lie in the superiority of the federal structure of the AAC over the centralised structure of the ANC. Political content was subsumed to the fetish of organisational form. The federal structure of the AAC, replicated in the Unity Movement, was said to allow for the expression of all different currents of political thought within the non-european population; the centralised structure of the ANC was said to be inherently dictatorial. Thus in the unity talks with the ANC Tabata turned federalism into another inviolable principle:

Creating a unitary organisation would mean creating one mass political party dictating to the African population. We would be arrogating to ourselves the right to dictate that no African shall have ideas different from our own ... We want the greatest amount of unity among the Africans ... No political party could dictate to all of the people. (29)

The problem which Tabata addressed was a real and important one; to construct a form of political organisation which in its quest for unity expressed rather than suppressed the diversity of political ideas among the oppressed. As a solution, however, his fetish of federalism proved to be an easy target for ANC critics arguing for the advantages of unitary organisation.

Beyond Tabata's elevation of superficial distinctions into absolute points of principle, the organisational doctrine he espoused for the Unity Movement had a basic premise in common with that of the ANC: namely their mutual commitment to organising in national movements rather than political parties. In the name of national unity and the

transcendence of class divisions within the oppressed nation, Tabata not only subsumed class politics to third world nationalism but also party politics to national movements. Thus the Minimum Programme, which was in fact the programme of a particular political party, was presented as if it were the direct expression of the will of the non-european nation as a whole. The Unity Movement failed to address the strengths of party politics vis-a-vis national movements:- that the grounds of affiliation lie in one's beliefs as a citizen and not one's national origins; that the views of a particular group appear for what they are, as part of the whole and not in place of the whole; that the particular interest does not parade as the universal and that the real universal, society, is not segmented into the sum of nationally defined particularisms. This was a fateful omission for the development of a democratic political culture on the left.

The hallmarks of the Unity Movement were sectarianism, abstentionism and absolute principle. The one flowed into the other, since any course of action or any alliance with another group was likely to involve compromise with an eternal principle supposedly enshrined in the Ten-Point Programme, whether it be that of anti-collaborationism, anti-centralism, anti-segregationism or anti-liberalism. We are reminded of the butt of Marx's satirical comments on 'political indifferentism':

The working class must not constitute itself a political party, for to combat the state is to recognise the state and this is contrary to an eternal principle... If in the political struggles against the bourgeois state, the workers succeed only

in extracting concessions, then they are guilty of compromise and this is contrary to eternal principles. (30)

Marx's own conclusion is equally pertinent;

while we cannot repudiate these patriarchs of socialism, just as chemists cannot repudiate their forbears the alchemists, we must at least avoid falling back into their mistakes, which, if we were to commit them, would be inexcusable.

In the 1940s the Unity Movement was a significant force on the left, challenging both the hegemony of the liberal-democratic current within the liberation movement and the division of the movement into separate national organisations. Its doctrines had an important formative influence on the political culture of the liberation movement as a whole even though the Unity Movement itself was destined by its own growing sterility to play no more than a bit part in the struggles to come. Its principal function was to channel trotskyism in particular and the left opposition more generally away from the development of a South African socialist tradition and into what it misconceived as a perfected form of black nationalism.

The ANC Youth League

If the radical non-european nationalism of the Unity Movement was to be relegated to the margins of the political stage, the radical african nationalism of the ANC Youth League was to play a historic role in the reformation of the liberation movement after its defeats in the 1940s. In terms of political sophistication, the Youth League was no match for the trotskysts and ex-trotskyist intellectuals of the Unity Movement, but in terms of political effectivity the scales were reversed. The young radicals represented by the Youth League were equally critical of the liberal democratic framework of the official ANC-CPSA leadership. In the words of A P Mda, the President of the Youth League, they characterised the ANC establishment as 'an organisation of gentlemen with clean hands' (31). They characterised the Communists as the bearers of a 'foreign ideology' that watered down the militancy and popular resonance of african nationalism. Invoking the memory of Garveyism through the slogan of 'Africa for the Africans', the Youth League put on the political agenda the return of the land to the african people as the primary objective of the movement and mass struggle by the african people as its means. The Youth League channelled its radicalism into a fiercely nationalistic framework, hostile both to the class politics of socialism and to liberal individualism. It idealised the unity of the african nation, rooting it in a common 'feeling of blackness' irrespective of all other social distinctions. It put forward 'race-pride' as the supreme virtue for africans, representing it as 'the self-realisation of the African spirit' and the antidote to 'the moral

degeneration' of the african who suffered from 'the worship and idolisation of white men, foreign leaders and ideologies' (32).

Tom Nairn has compared nationalism to the Roman god, Janus, who stands above gateways with one face looking forward and one backwards (33). African nationalism had this Janus quality. The liberal establishment looked to a future transcendence of primitivism and the coming of what it called 'civilisation'; the radical youth looked to the restoration of a past age when the african was the sole possessor of the land and the invading european had no claim to ownership or power. Each side problematised african nationalism in different ways; the image of an integrated future challenged the separation of africans from the other nations said to inhabit South Africa; the restoration of the past raised the spectre not of a primordial unity of the african nation but of a multiplicity of often warring clans and kingdoms. In rejecting the conservatism of the ANC establishment, the radicals in the Youth League also rejected its progressivism. The programme of the Youth League was not designed to push the forward looking programme of the african nationalist establishment beyond its liberal limits but rather to recapture the past in the name of an imagined community of africans.

The Youth League stood for the right of the african nation both to lead the liberation struggle and to rule the new society which would emerge out of this struggle; its claim based on the characteristics of the african nation as the indigenous, the majority and the most oppressed nation of South

Africa. It was an empowering discourse for african people habituated to an ideology of white supremacy and to the association of the european with colonial oppression. It was also a discourse which reflected in inverse form the gathering racism of the state.

Breuilly has made the perceptive comment that 'nationalism is a parasitic movement and ideology shaped by what it opposes' (34). This was in some respects true of the formal relation between african nationalism and afrikaner nationalism. Both looked to the capture of the state by their own particular national group and justified the right of their nation to power by virtue of special qualities belonging to their nation. Both espoused idealistic notions of the essential unity of their nation and viewed nationalism as the highest form of political consciousness and organisation. Both were hostile to socialism seen as on the one hand dividing the nation along lines of class and on the other of obscuring the boundaries between the nations through its endeavours to construct class unities. Both sought to mobilise their respective components of the working class as a mass base for their nationalist objectives, being hostile to socialists for the additional reason that they were competing for the allegiance of the same workers. Both were hostile to liberalism for disaggregating national unity in the name of individual autonomy and right.

The content of afrikaner and african nationalism was vastly different, the one representing the nationalism of the oppressor and the other the nationalism of the oppressed, but their formal similarities pointed to the

limitations of radical african nationalism as the basis of a consistently democratic opposition to state racism. The rise of afrikaner nationalism in the 1940s corroborated the african nationalist view of the world; as the parody of a long gone colonialism was mythically re-enacted by the Boer nationalists, from below the struggle for democracy took on the illusory and inconsistent form of an anti-colonial liberation struggle of the african people.

In the 1940s the radical african nationalists of the Youth League had little relation to working class organisation. They stood for a turn to mass struggle; not by reconstructing the existing labour movement but by constructing a new national movement in its place. The Youth League saw itself as 'the brains trust and power station of the spirit of African nationalism' whose role was to prepare the future leaders of the people and rouse popular consciousness through the example of their 'high ethical standards' (35). They assigned to the consciousness of the masses a 'natural nationalism', sometimes revealed on the surface but more often repressed beneath the demoralised outlook of the urban african or suppressed by the foreign ideologies of socialism.

Prior to 1948 the ideology of the Youth League did not have much resonance outside the radical intelligentsia. What made it possible for the Youth League to reach out to the masses in practice as well as in theory was the defeat and fragmentation of the working class movement. It was not at all the case that african nationalism de-railed the working class movement, as

some critics on the left have claimed; nor was it the case that the rise of a radicalised african nationalism represented a step forward in the march of political reason, as the orthodox historians have seen it; rather it was the forced retreat of the working class to the back of the political stage combined with the self-dissolution of socialist politics which allowed african nationalism to fill the space made available. The dissolution of the labour movement prepared the ground for each communal section of the working class to protect its own national interest and rally behind the banner of its nationalist leaders. At the same time, socialist voices were either silenced by external repression or themselves subordinated to one or other form of black nationalism.

It was only with the moderation of the Youth League's extreme nationalism after the war, which coincided with the stemming of the tide of working class resistance, that it began to win significant support beyond its own ranks. The 'new spirit of African nationalism' split into two camps in this period; the 'moderate' and the 'extreme ultra-revolutionary' to use the terminology of the former. Rejecting the slogan of 'Africa for the Africans' and the cry of 'hurl the white man into the sea', the moderates conceived of South Africa as a country of four chief nationalities - white, coloured, indian and african - the last three of which suffered national oppression (36). It was 'not against the European as a human being but irrevocably opposed to white domination'. It sought to tie african self-sufficiency to an alliance with other national groups, including progressive whites, aimed at the attainment of 'true democracy... and the removal of all discriminatory laws and colour bars'. Its policy looked

forward now to the admission of the african into 'full citizenship of the country so that he had direct representation in parliament on a democratic basis'. It was based on the appreciation that the historical omlette could not be unscrambled, whatever the injustices of european colonialism; 'the different racial groups have come to stay' (37). The Youth League's specific form of african nationalism survived in the idea that africans should organise separately from the other national groups and that the african nation had the right to lead the struggle for liberation as a whole. The liberalisation of the dominant faction in the Youth League made it more open to democratic ideas but at the same time watered down its radicalism. This antinomy between racialism and radicalism on the 'extreme' side of the Youth League and multi-racialism and liberalism on the 'moderate' side was to become the hallmark african nationalism in the next decade (38).

Radicalised african nationalism was an open-ended movement, fluid in its political commitments, youthful and angry, rebellious and impatient. It both expanded the democratic potential of african nationalism and immersed it in dangerous racial phantasies mirroring the very forces of afrikaner nationalism against which it was pitted. The defeat and fragmentation of the labour movement, coupled with the profound crisis of socialist thought which accompanied it, laid the ground for the rise of african nationalism in the 1950s as the hegemonic ideology of the left.

The limits of the left opposition

The left opposition failed to provide an alternative axis of political leadership to black labour in the 1940s. This was due not simply to external pressures but to the inner character of the left. First, the most apparent weakness of the left opposition lay in the multiple divisions which ran through it: between nationalists and socialists, between different varieties of black nationalism and different varieties of socialism. These political divisions were combined with ethnic divisions in such a way as to make overall cohesion very difficult to achieve.

Second, as the labour movement itself fragmented in the course of its decline, the left opposition was deeply affected by and often led the drift away from class politics to nationalism. The syndicalist wing of the left opposition made the most serious effort to re-construct the black labour movement from within but as the trade unions fell apart the left opposition as a whole with only one or two marginal exceptions oriented itself to the building of an alternative social movement under one or other form of black nationalist leadership.

The left opposition's strength lay in its negative critique of the liberal-democratic strategy of the ANC-CPSA leadership; its weakness lay in providing any positive alternative in the 1940s. It tended to reject any strategy of democratisation, any orientation to reform, any participation

in state structures, any negotiation with the state or the employers, any relation to liberalism and finally perhaps any class perspective. Most turned their radicalism into a rejection of white society as such.

The defeat of the labour movement, the fragmentation of the working class, the crisis of South African socialism, the ascendancy of afrikaner nationalism - all these factors combined to shape the contours of the left opposition in the 1940s in ways which were profoundly to influence the evolution of the liberation movement. They certainly did not augur well for the building of a non-racial and democratic workers' movement in opposition to apartheid.

Ch. 5 Black Workers and the White Labour Movement

The white labour movement

The black labour movement in the 1940s was too weak to fight the battle for democracy on the basis of its own resources alone and without the support of allies beyond its own ranks. In different ways this perception formed the national core both of the policy of the people's front put forward by the Communist Party and of the various forms of black nationalism. The issue for black workers, however, was not whether to form alliances beyond its own ranks but how and with whom. While both african and non-european nationalism necessarily looked away from the white working class, the people's front policy looked to the building of a 'united front' between the black and white sections of the organised working class. In the historiography of the national liberation movement the orientation of the CPSA to white labour has usually appeared as a symptom of the growing pains of the party, a vestige of the origins of communism in the white labour movement which led to unnecessary concessions to white chauvinism and which was only resolved in the 1950s when the CPSA finally accepted the hegemony of african nationalism. (1)

Within this model racialism has been seen as such a deeply embedded attribute of white workers in the 1940s - ideologically reflective of their colonial mentality toward black people and economically rooted in their

class position as an aristocracy of labour performing a policing role over black labour - that their lack of solidarity with black workers and their receptivity to the appeals of afrikaner nationalism need little further explanation. O'Meara, for instance, writes that 'the racial division of labour between skilled and unskilled was finally laid down by the intense class conflict 1900-22' and that by the 1930s 'the leadership of the white trade union movement had been incorporated into the formal structures of power with the Pact government and continued in this position under the United Party regime of General Hertzog. Confrontations between capital and organised white labour were thus ruled out'. He concluded that 'white and black fractions of the working class have been irreconcilably divided, to the point where the economic and social position of the former rests on the economic exploitation of the latter' (2). In similar vein Rob Davies has argued that by the end of the 1930s 'the poor white problem has ceased to exist'. Industrialisation had created 82,000 new jobs for white workers, with colour bars, high minimum wages, state subsidised employment and public works projects, ensuring that white workers were the beneficiary of industrial growth. Davies concluded that 'white workers benefit from the surplus value created by blacks; in other words, they indirectly share in the exploitation of blacks, via their political support for the state and the economic privileges they receive from it in return' (3).

The idea, however, that one group of workers receives economic privileges only by sharing in the exploitation of another group of workers, is questionable economics. It would appear to assume a finite wage fund, meaning that some workers can only receive more wages if others receive

less, and thereby ignores the capacity of the working class as a whole to win a greater share of the nation's wealth at the expense of the surplus value expropriated by capital. The focus on the quantitative aspect of wages also ignores the qualitative aspect of subordination inherent in the wage slavery itself. Historically better-paid skilled workers who might appear to have constituted labour aristocracies have often been among the leaders of working class movements, belying an economic determinism which assumes a link between privileged economic conditions and political conservatism. The CPSA in the 1940s was not wrong to orient to the unity of white and black labour; the question was how.

A rigid racial division of labour between white skilled and black unskilled was laid down in the mines between 1900 and 1922, but this was not true of the more fluid racial division of labour in the expanding industrial sector. In this area of production in the 1940s, there were growing numbers of skilled and semi-skilled black workers (particularly if we include coloureds) and large numbers of unskilled white workers (particularly afrikaner women). The industrial boom during the war and the absence of many white workers on military service hastened the entry of blacks into skilled and semi-skilled employment. Colour and privilege were by no means precisely correlated. Nor was it the case in the 1940s that the black and white labour movements were totally insulated from each other. Though having a relative autonomy, they were not contained in water-tight compartments. Significant organic links between white and black workers were established in the labour movement in this period, certainly in comparison with any that had been constructed before. The question which

faces us is why the class solidarities, fragmentary and limited as they were, which were formed in the 1940s were shattered by the end of the decade.

The registered trade union movement was divided by fierce battles between the left and right. On the left there were many white trade unionists who combatted the racism of white workers, were fiercely independent of the state and sometimes sought to ally white and black workers. The left was generally associated with the new industrial unions, organising both the unskilled and those craft workers who in response to the erosion of their skills turned to 'open' industrial unions rather than to racial exclusivism. On the right wing of the trade union movement, the leadership of the Trades and Labour Council (TLC), was dominated by a thoroughly racist and conservative bureaucracy who were generally associated with English-speaking craft unions. Their predominant response to skill erosion was to search for racially defined privileges under the political wing of the segregationist Labour Party. It participated in Smuts' war-time cabinet and provided its Minister of Labour, Walter Madeley. On the extreme right, afrikaner nationalism offered a yet more racist form of Christian National unionism for the generally unskilled afrikaner workers, playing in particular on their alienation from the labour bureaucracy from which they were excluded. The outcome of this political battle between left and right was not written in advance. (4)

For the first twenty five years of this century most white workers had been soaked in racial prejudice so that their normal attitude to black workers was one of exclusion, domination and open hostility. The most militant of white strikes of the earlier period, the Rand Revolt of 1922 among white mineworkers, was aimed both at the mine bosses and at the exclusion of black workers, its leadership's mix of socialism and racism vividly characterised by the slogan 'workers of the world unite for a white South Africa'. The racial division of labour turned many white workers into a privileged aristocracy and the 'civilised labour' policies pursued by the state re-inforced the racial division of labour in the 1920s. Many white workers had black domestic servants, thus establishing in the home a relationship of racial servility. The Botha Commission reported that in 1936 the 86% of the total workforce that was black earnt only 25.5% of the national income. The per capita income of a black worker was 8% of that received by white workers; the per capital income of asians was three times that of africans and coloureds were midway between africans and asians. (5)

Industrialisation at first only partially reproduced this racial division of labour. Within the white section of the working class, there were considerable disparities: between miners and industrial workers, craft workers and the unskilled, english-speaking workers and afrikaners, the well-paid and the poor. The vast gap by European standards between the wages of the skilled and unskilled not only divided white from black but also white from white. Many newly proletarianised afrikaners, especially women workers, were poor and had few skills. The privileges of craft workers were under threat as mechanisation and de-skilling from above and

the entry of black and afrikaner workers from below into skilled and semi-skilled occupations rocked their craft-based controls over labour recruitment and the labour process.

Although the wage gap between white and black industrial workers narrowed during the war, industrial wages in general rose and the fears of white workers that blacks workers would take away their jobs were allayed as the full employment of whites proved compatible with, if not dependent on, the increased employment of africans in this time of industrial expansion. Solly Sachs, the socialist leader of the Garment Workers Union, commented along these lines that as industry began to grow in the late 1930s 'race conflicts in the factories became less marked. The bitterness between white and black since 1936 was engendered mainly by outside bodies, such as the Nationalist Party... There was no scramble for jobs and in times of unemployment both whites and blacks lost their livelihood' (6).

Many independent socialists, like Solly Sachs and Johanna Cornelius of the Garment Workers Union (GWU) and Communists like Bill Andrews and Bennie Weinbren espoused socialist ideas in the Trades and Labour Council. Sachs in particular believed that the anti-imperialism of poor afrikaner workers could be redirected in a democratic direction. With both the CPSA and the independent socialists offering themselves as a political alternative to the Labour Party and afrikaner nationalist leaderships, Solly Sachs summed up their attempt to explain and combat the racism of white workers in class terms:

Apologists for the capitalist system in South Africa try to put the blame for the Colour Bar upon the white workers. It is perfectly true that only a comparatively small number of white workers are free from racial prejudice and that many white trade union leaders are stooges of the Nationalist Party ... Of course, a bounden duty rests upon all trade unionists to fight against the curse of racialism in the workers' ranks and for a united trade union movement. The so-called 'liberals', however, who put the entire blame for the Colour Bar in industry upon the white workers are insidiously trying to exonerate the real culprits. The people responsible for spreading race hatred are the landowners and mineowners ... The workers are the dupes, not the authors, of race hatred. Race hatred is a powerful weapon in the hands of those who always seek cheap labour; it is a curse to white workers ... The enemies of black workers, the Nationalist Party, the United Party, the Chamber of Mines, are also the sworn enemies of the white workers. (7)

Although the TLC nationally was dominated by a racist bureaucracy, local committees of the TLC were closer to the rank and file and more supportive of black workers. Thus local Witwatersrand and Vereeniging committees of the TLC gave support to the 1946 African Mineworkers' Strike, while the TLC national leadership fully endorsed police action against the strikers. The TLC itself, though dominated by conservative craft unions, was established in 1930 on a non-racial basis and called for the legal recognition of african trade unions under the Industrial Conciliation Act. For the leadership of the TLC, this verbal commitment to non-racialism was maintained largely through fudge and hyprocricy, but it provided a

framework which allowed the left to mobilise. The rapid growth of the TLC between 1937 and 1947, from 32 unions to 117, and the growing weight of industrial unionism, were grounds for optimism among the activists.

During the war, a number of left wing TLC unions (tobacco, sweets, food and canning, tin, textiles, laundering and clothing) began to admit africans to membership. They believed that, since black workers in these industries were doing semi-skilled or skilled work, it was imperative to organise them if the economic struggles of white, asian and coloured workers were not to be undercut by cheap black labour. At least two unions, Tobacco and Food and Canning, insisted upon having only one union for all 'races' and the Labour Department resisted registration for this reason. The government's policy was to deregister any registered union which admitted blacks to membership, so depriving them of rights to bargain collectively or call a legal strike. The majority of registered unions felt constrained to recruit black workers into separate parallel unions, but in some cases, like that of the Garment Workers, the white and black unions worked closely together. In 1944 the Garment Workers Union used a loophole in the law to establish the right of african women to become members of a registered union.

Lewis reports that in 1949 there were still some eleven registered unions resisting the Labour Department's instructions to exclude 'natives' (8). These unions obtained, by negotiation or in some cases by strike action, major increases in the very low levels of semi-skilled wages, and semi-skilled black workers in these industries became the highest paid workers

on the Rand. There were at least three strikes during which black and white workers worked together. Johanna Cornelius, for example, the Secretary of the Tobacco Workers Union, testified to the degree of inter-racial solidarity displayed in the September 1940 tobacco strike:

The union put up a wonderful fight when the employers were prepared to give the 5/- War Bonus to the European workers and the Non-European workers a much smaller bonus. 600 tobacco workers irrespective of race or colour demonstrated in the streets of Johannesburg demanding a 5/- War Bonus for all workers. The future policy of the union is that no agreement will be signed ... unless it included all workers. (9)

The Johannesburg Star in its paternalist style identified as a cause of the December 1942 strike wave the example set by 'European trade unionists ... especially the sweetmakers' strike, when the native employees formed their own procession to march behind that of the Europeans in the industry' (10). And during the 1942 sweet strike the union secretary, E J Burford, was amazed to see white afrikaner women sitting down next to black workers at strike committee meetings and insisting that blacks and whites should get the same pay, even though in their daily marches through the streets of Johannesburg white and black went in separate columns.

One of the most important wage increase after 1942 for black workers was achieved in co-operation with white workers. At a meeting of the Industrial Conciliation board in 1943, the union representing white shopworkers, the National Union of Distributive Workers (NUDW), supported the demand of the black union, African Commercial and Distributive Workers Union (ACDWU)

under the leadership of Dan Koza, for a minimum wage of £2 a week. This would have been the highest labourers' wage on the Witwatersrand. The NUDW promised the black union that it would not come to any agreement that was not acceptable to both unions and secured the presence of black union officials at the conciliation meetings. When the white workers were refused an increase, the ACDWU pledged solidarity and threatened strike action should the negotiations fail. A separate agreement was made between the ACDWU and the employers which was strongly supported by the president of the NUDW, Morris Kagan. He wrote that 'the wages of the African workers are at present so low that no delay should be permitted in bringing about an improvement ... It would be asking the African workers too much to come out in illegal sympathy strike under such circumstances ... The African trade unions have some justifiable complaints against the treatment meted out to them in the past by certain trade unions, who had unfortunately so often used the African unions to their own advantage'. (11) The Conciliation Board agreement was rejected by the Minister of Labour on the ground that the unions were not representative but a Wage Board inquiry was ordered for the commercial distributive trade. Once the Conciliation Board was dissolved, white workers were legally free to strike and did so at O.K. Bazaars. After a fierce battle, the strike was successful and most of the NUDW's demands were met. The Wage Board granted substantial wage increases to black and white workers and the right to stop-orders was extended to the ACDWU. This put the ACDWU on a far firmer financial footing than most black unions and released its officials from the huge burden of collecting individual subscriptions.

The complexity of craft workers' response to deskilling, mechanisation and craft unionism was revealed in the 1947 strike of craft workers in the building trade. Denied an increase in their basic rates of pay for fourteen years, threatened with dilution of craft skills, employed on a casual basis with inevitable periods of unemployment made worse by the poverty of the government's house-building programme, hemmed in during the war by anti-strike legislation, over 10,000 white workers finally came out on strike for nine weeks. The base of their organisation was a rank and file movement of joint job steward committees formed during the war, and an industrial union, the Building Workers' Industrial Union, which sought to replace the plurality of craft unions operating within the industry.

The strike soon acquired an political complexion as the strike bulletins repudiated government attacks. In answer to press attacks hypocritically blaming the building workers for the housing crisis, the strike bulletins argued that 'it is not the building workers, Mr Editor, who are responsible for the terrible housing conditions for the masses of the common people. It is the land speculators, merchants and other profiteers. The building workers are fighting determinedly for a living wage so as to abolish poverty and slums' (12). As the police attacked the strikers, the bulletins called for the removal of 'all the reactionary anti-labour laws' and propaganda was put out outlining the 'four freedoms' of workers in capitalism: 'to starve... to pay taxes... to die for their country... and to serve their masters'. There were violent attempts by stormtroopers from Pretoria and by craft unions in the building industry and in the TLC more generally to break the strike under the cover of the bogey of communism.

Yet the job stewards committees and the Building Workers' Industrial Union held out. They received active support from a number of industrial unions in the TLC, especially Sachs' Garment Workers, and according to Lewis from some coloured and african unions in the building industry. The strike ended in a notable victory (13). Simons' retrospective view of the strike as one centered exclusively around the protection of white privileges does not convey the whole story (14).

The other major source of white working class militancy came from poor and unskilled afrikaner workers whose discontents socialists sought to channel in opposition to the Nationalists. In 1939, one communist activist, David Cohen, wrote about the thousands of white workers living 'below the bread line':

You find them living in great poverty in the slums, you find them on the irrigation schemes, living in tin shelters built by the government ... They are deprived of their homes, separated from their women and children ... Should these people refuse to take on government jobs of this nature, they would starve. Their wages are small. Their children get no education ... Every day they become more desperate... Many of them now begin to realise that the slogan of the robber class 'White South Africa' is one which benefits that class only and impoverishes all the other people in South Africa. (15)

Many of these white workers, especially women, joined militant trade unions like the the Garment Workers Union (GWU). They fought courageous and often successful battles against sweating labour and exploitation. They stayed

loyal to their union in the face of jew-baiting and anti-communist attacks launched by the afrikaner nationalists. They worked as operatives alongside black workers, receiving comparable wages. Indeed wage differentials were as great in terms of gender as of race. The GWU sustained their loyalty on the basis of a considerable degree of internal democracy with strong shop steward organisation. While its focus was on winning bread-and-butter demands, it also appealed to the spirit of anti-British imperialism among afrikaner workers to redirect nationalist sentiment to a more progressive end. It admitted coloured, asian and african women workers, though it organised them in separate branches, and it gave support to Gana Makabeni's African Clothing Workers Union as well as other black unions. Its membership rose between 1937 and 1947 from 2000 to almost 12,000 becoming the second largest union in the TLC after the Mineworkers. The GWU was not immune to racist ideas, as indicated perhaps by some of the concessions made to parallel unionism and separate organisation for black workers, particularly after 1945 when internal pressures toward racism among white workers became more pronounced, but it fought racism within and without as part and parcel of the independent trade unionism it espoused (16).

The union leadership made serious attempts to build a socialist political organisation beyond the trade union sphere. Sachs sought to find 'a political home... for the thousands of politically homeless European workers and poor people' and saw this as 'the major immediate task for the Trade Union Movement and all progressives' (17). Sachs himself had been a member of the Communist Party and in 1930 was on the Central Committee. With the Party's turn, at the direction of the Comintern, to an ultra-left

form of African nationalism under the slogan of the 'Native Republic', Sachs was among the many purged in 1931 in 'an orgy of self-destruction' for holding onto a class perspective of workers' unity. Seeing the Communist Party as having turned its back on white workers, Sachs' response was not to retreat to the unions alone but rather to look to the creation of an alternative socialist platform. In 1943 he wrote in the Klerewerker:

We have never played into the hands of the capitalists by shouting: 'we have no political principles'. On the contrary, we have stated all along that the political struggle of the workers goes with their economic struggle... As long as political power is in the hands of the enemies of the workers, the workers will never enjoy the things to which they are entitled. (18)

The yarstick of a political home for workers was a party prepared to 'protect and further the interests of the masses of workers'. The question Sachs and the GWU faced was how to build it.

Until 1943 the GWU supported the Labour Party while fighting to change it from within. When the war broke out, relations between the union and the Labour Party deteriorated, as the Labour Party entered into government and Walter Madeley became Minister of Labour. Madeley's anti-trade union policies hit the GWU directly; maternity leave allowances were not paid, sections of the GWU were not registered, Industrial Conciliation agreements were held up. Sachs characterised the Labour Party as 'a collection of nincompoops and job hunters'. When in 1943 the government introduced War Measures making strikes illegal and imposing compulsory arbitration and

when the Labour Party entered into an election pact with the United Party, 'the Party of Mining and Finance Capital', the die was cast.

The GWU called a National Labour Congress to create an alternative party rooted in 'the true principles of Labour, Democracy and Socialism'. The union's motion to the TLC to terminate collaboration with the Labour Party was defeated by the bureaucracy but the Congress went ahead with 120 delegates said to represent some 120,000 workers. It adopted a Workers Charter, calling for a 40 hour week, a minimum wage for the unskilled, a month's holiday on full pay, more democratic labour laws and protection for women. Out of the Congress, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) was formed to contest the 1943 election as 'a virulent and potent force in the cause of working class ideals'. In its election campaign the ILP stressed a decent wage for all workers, women's rights and workers' unity in opposition to the job colour bar. As Anna Scheepers, one of the ILP candidates put it, 'they are trying to improve the standards of the unskilled workers at the expense of the skilled artisans. They want to divide the workers. We will not stand for it. A reduction in the standards of skilled workers means a general lowering of wages. Let the employers bear the burden, not the artisans' (19). In an article in *Trek* Sachs bitterly criticised South African liberalism which, he argued was doomed 'unless and until it learns to understand the workers' problems and finds a concrete basis of co-operation with the masses of workers, European and Non-European.' Sachs was convinced that the inactivity and deliberate inattention to the workers' complaints by the United Party-supporting unions 'drive the workers into the camp of the fascists' (20).

In political terms the ILP was a small and transitory voice. In the elections, Sachs himself only won 6.9% of the votes cast in Jeppe, behind the United Party with 70.3% and the HNP with 18%. It was the same story with the ILP's other two candidates. After the election, the ILP fused with the Progressive Labour Group to form the Socialist Party, but this too had no more success. The electoral record was bad and commentators have noted the 'schizophrenia' shown by members of the GWU who strongly supported the union but not its political offspring. Sachs has often been portrayed as naive in his belief that white workers could be won to socialism as well as trade unionism. The importance of the ILP was that it represented an attempt to tackle the problem of building a workers' party out of a trade union base. The attempt failed but its failure requires further explanation.

Its central weakness lay not in seeking to organise white workers politically behind a working class banner but in doing so in isolation from black workers. In his own account written in 1952, Sachs presented an uneasy compromise between union and party politics. While espousing the cause of non-racial socialism, he argued that 'the balance of political power and the political future of South Africa lie largely in the hands of the Afrikaner workers of the urban areas... The shrewd politicians of the Nationalist Party realise full well that they can retain their power only by having the support of the majority of European workers and have concentrated tremendous efforts on securing that support' (21). In focussing on bread and butter issues, however, Sachs did little to develop a political programme to counter that of the Nationalists.

Criticism of the isolation of Sachs' project from black workers was voiced at the time by *the Communist Party in Inkululeko* when in a review of the 1943 elections it wrote that Sachs' party 'fought the election on a programme which appealed to the most reactionary and backward section of the European workers by omitting any reference to the burning grievances of the non-European people... The results have clearly shown that an appeal to the European workers to support a "socialist party" without reference to the demands of the non-European people, is not the easy way to power that the ILP imagined' (22). This was fair criticism, but it should be put in the context of the CPSA's own alliance with the official Labour Party as part of its people's front policy, which made the CPSA hostile to the militant break-away led by Sachs. The opposition of the CPSA was one of the factors which contributed to the failure of the ILP initiative and to the growing alienation of afrikaner workers from socialist politics. Sachs himself, revealing his own political origins, was hamstrung by his own tendency to idealise the Soviet state and to subsume the class struggle in South Africa to the defence of the Soviet Union. The evidence available to us is incomplete, but it would appear that his decision to organise the left politically in 1943 was associated with his own reluctance to endorse industrial action that would disrupt war production.

The success of Afrikaner nationalism in winning the allegiance of white workers depended on its ability to exploit the weaknesses of the existing labour movement. Before the war, attempts by nationalists to wean afrikaner workers toward their own brand of Christian-National trade unionism were generally unsuccessful, except in the case of the white railway workers

organised in *Die Spoorbond*, where nationalists were able to exploit the exclusion of unskilled afrikaners from the dominant craft unions.

It was only in the course of the war that afrikaner nationalists for the first time seriously oriented to the mass organisation of workers. Its two main political organisations, the OB and the HNP, each formed trade union wings: the *Arbeidsfront* and the *Blankewerkersbeskernig* in 1942 and 1943 respectively. The receptivity of afrikaner workers to nationalist 'trade unions' was still limited, but the nationalists were able to exploit strong discontent among afrikaner workers with the alien English-speaking bureaucracies which ran the craft unions and dominated the TLC and with the collaborationist 'nest of careerists' who ran the Labour Party. Thus their first success was to instigate a rank and file revolt among afrikaner mineworkers against a union leadership whose main function during the war was to resist its own members' wage demands and prevent strike action. Two rank and file strikes in 1946 and 1947 against the closed shop engineered by the employers and the Mine Workers Union resulted in a nationalist take-over of the union (23). The Afrikaner nationalists were able to take advantage of the disintegration of the Labour Party from 1943, as the latter dug its own grave through its participation in the Smuts government and its direct involvement in the suppression of trade unionism. They were better able to exploit the bankruptcy of labourism and craft unionism than were any of the socialists.

As the rot set in, nationalist agitation even managed to take root among some members of the Garment Workers, with an unsuccessful revolt against Sachs' leadership coming from its Germiston branch in 1944; particularly as the centre of gravity of the garment industry moved away from white workers in the Transvaal toward coloured workers in the Cape, Sachs attempted to respond to this new situation, sending organisers to the Cape, but seemingly without much success.

After 1946, the TLC membership declined from 184,000 in 1947 to 82,000 in 1952 and the organisation split up. In 1947 a number of Pretoria unions led by the Iron and Steel Trades Association split off over the issue of African unions being allowed to affiliate. The following year, they were joined by the Mineworkers, who together formed the racially-based Co-ordinating Council of South African Trade Unions. In 1950, the final body blow came when the craft unions disaffiliated and established the South African Federation of Trade Unions, while the TLC itself voted for parallel unionism for Africans workers. During this period of decline, the left fought a rearguard action. In 1946 Sachs and other TLC members established a Technical Advisory Committee to help the ailing CNETU unions. The same year a call from the TLC for a ballot among its member unions for a general strike over food price increases and shortages was sabotaged by the craft union bureaucracy. In 1947 a motion in the TLC to exclude africans was defeated; Sachs' motion to elect the NEC by the delegate vote, designed to break the stranglehold of the craft unions over the TLC, was defeated by a narrow margin; and the left increased its representation on the NEC. In 1948 the Communist Party proclaimed that the left had won control of the

TLC, but the left was dependent on the support of moderate unions, like the Engineers, which itself practiced a colour bar and proved to be an unreliable ally (it supported the Suppression of Communism Bill in 1950 which was aimed especially at the left in the TLC).

One of the major factors behind the decline of independent trade unionism among white workers lay in their failure to turn the fragmentary links they had with black unions into a firmer organisational unity. Commenting on why this was the case, Jon Lewis has pointed to the changing racial composition of the productive workforce in industry as one of the factors which led to the growth of racism within the industrial unions themselves and the decline of CNETU as an alternative centre of gravity for trade union organisation. He wrote:

The established industrial unions lacked the confidence to break completely with the increasingly racist craft unions and to ally instead with the independent African unions... In the first place, left wing leaders were having to fight off racist opposition groups within their own unions... Most important, the post-war decline of the independent African trade union movement reduced the incentive to split from the TLC and the possibility of a re-alignment on the left as Sachs had once proposed. (24)

There were in addition specific political obstacles coming from the left. The CPSA argued strongly for trade union unity between white and black workers but sought to realise it under the aegis of the TLC, arguing that they wanted it to become 'the mouthpiece of all workers irrespective of race, colour or creed' (25). The CPSA recognised the 'reactionary policy of

the leadership' but thought that the admission of black unions would force it to change into 'a real, militant workers' organisation'. This approach to the question of unity, a heritage of the white labour tradition, misconstrued where the centre of gravity of the labour movement was to be found. It was also unrealistic since the bureaucracy of the TLC would not allow its own grave to be dug through the admission of black unions and since few black unions proved willing to submit themselves to the discipline of the TLC bureaucracy.

The theoretical perspective put forward by Sachs was better founded, calling for the withdrawal of progressive unions from the TLC and their affiliation to CNETU, but none of the registered unions, including the Garment Workers, in practice followed this course of action. This was related to the weakening of CNETU and the growth of racialism within the industrial unions, but also, I think, to a lack of political nerve on the part of the leadership. The opposition of the CPSA to the left industrial unions leaving the TLC and joining CNETU must have added a further political obstacle of some weight given the party's leading role in CNETU and influence within the left of the registered unions. Further, most of the left opposition inside CNETU had written off white labour as a lost cause, Dan Koza arguing instead for the development of the black trade union movement under the aegis of the national liberation organisations (at first the ANC and later the All Africa Convention). This was a reaction against the CPSA's image of unification under the TLC, seen as a covert form of white patronage, but just as effectively eschewed the possibility of a non-racial trade union movement. Koza worked with white trade

unionists in specific instances but his search for a political voice for black workers led him to argue for the affiliation of the black trade unions to the political movement for national liberation (26). Faced with these different forms of opposition from the left in addition to the obstacles posed by the right, it was perhaps no surprise that dreams of non-racial unification did not materialise.

Similar divisions within the left were present in debates over state recognition (27). White, coloured, asian workers and for a time african women could belong legally to unions registered under the Industrial Conciliation Act. Registration brought real legal advantages for unions but at the cost of working through the bureaucratic and restrictive machinery of industrial councils. Sachs fought for the right of registered unions to be racially mixed and against the restrictions on the right to strike imposed by the ICA. He argued that in spite of the benefits of registration the ICA had been damaging to white unions, so that the correct approach was not to impose this framework on black workers as well but for black and white workers alike to fight for the right to free collective bargaining, independent union organisation and the right to strike. On the left of CNETU Dan Koza rejected the whole framework of registration, arguing that the liberals of the Department of Labour would prove no less inimical to black trade unionism than the Native Affairs Department and demanding the unfettered right to strike without restriction.

The approach adopted by the CPSA corresponded precisely to that of the Labour Party in its 1945 Manifesto on Native Policy and the TLC. It called for the recognition of african unions but under the existing ICA as a first stage toward fuller recognition but did not couple this demand with the reform of the legal framework itself. Consequently its campaign offered no immediate incentives to registered unions already hemmed in by the restrictive terms of the ICA and must have had limited appeal to black workers unenchanted by the prospect of registration on this basis. While the chance to build a common front between CNETU and the left in the TLC around the extension and democratic reform of the ICA slipped away, the Smuts government after years of procrastination finally introduced its Industrial Conciliation (Natives) Bill in 1947, the terms of which were so restrictive that CNETU repudiated the reform. The election victory of the Afrikaner Nationalists in 1948 put a closure on any possibility of progressive reform of trade union law.

The defeat of independent trade unionism among white workers increased their receptivity to the appeals of afrikaner nationalism and allowed them to become an important prop for the apartheid state. It represented a heavy blow for the black labour movement as well. As the fragmentary links between black and white workers were severed, so too the structural position of both black and white workers changed. Significant numbers of white workers began to be drawn into the ranks of the middle classes and black workers began to form a bigger majority of the industrial working class as a whole. These structural changes meant that the future of non-racial trade unionism lay increasingly in the hands of black workers alone.

Chapter 6

A Concluding Comment

In focussing on the relation between trade unions and politics, we have omitted important areas of working class organisation and resistance in the 1940s; not least the community movements in the black townships and the sporadic protests of rural workers. Whether these sites of struggle reveal a similar relationship of the political leaders to the working class as we found in the trade union sphere is a vital question but not to be addressed in the body of the text (see appendix 2). My view is that such further research reinforces rather than undercuts our basic conclusions. We may summarise them thus.

1. We need to engage with the fact that the class struggles of the period ended in defeat for the working class and that the emergence of apartheid occurred in the context of the prior defeat inflicted on labour. There can be no doubt that the defeats suffered by the labour movement significantly demoralised workers. We have to abandon the simplified image of the organisation and combativity of black workers ever escalating in the 1940s and of the defeats inflicted on labour struggles (like the miners' strike) serving only as a catalyst for yet more militancy from below. *La lotta continua* but not in this mechanistic form.

2. In evaluating why the labour movement was defeated in the 1940s, two factors outside the control of the labour movement itself stand out. The first lay in the class structure of South African society, which was such that, although the mass of the population was either proletarianised or well on the way to proletarianisation, the social weight of the proletariat as a force for democratic change was as yet insubstantial. The second factor lay in the weakness of liberalism as a political force within the ruling class and the decisiveness with which the ruling class as a whole attacked the organised labour movement. These two factors were linked. It was in part because of the lack of independent power of the proletariat, that the strategy of accomodation within official circles was at first marginal and then jettisoned.

3. The strategies and tactics pursued by the leadership of the labour movement in the 1940s contributed to the defeats suffered by the movement. The consensual approach followed by most of the black union officialdom, the white labour bureaucracy, the Communist Party, the African National Congress and the liberal intelligentsia failed in its own terms. Based on a policy of self-imposed constraint from below and reform from above, it became increasingly alienated from both sides. Its lack of support for direct industrial and community action by workers led to a stiffening of the joints and a dulling of the reflexes of the labour movement. Its petitions and deputations for democratic reform fell on the closed ears of the government and employers. At first this leadership was tolerated and given room to breathe as long as the rulers felt that it was performing a useful function in restraining the power of labour. Later, after the threat

from labour receded, the political leadership itself was attacked from above and was by then incapable of mounting an effective resistance. It would be wrong, however, to see this political leadership as 'responsible' for the failure of the labour movement. It is more likely that the labour movement would have lost this round of the class struggle whatever policies its leadership followed.

4. The growth of the left opposition should be seen as a response to the perceived failures of the prevailing political leadership and as the political expression of the more heroic and militant side of the labour movement. The left opposition itself, however, was deeply fragmented between radical nationalists and socialists and between rival forms of nationalism and socialism. There were efforts to save and reconstruct the labour movement made by socialists within the trotskyist movement (especially in the WIL and PTU), the Communist Party (especially when it veered to the left in 1946) and the extreme left of the white labour movement (especially Solly Sachs and his comrades), but in general the left opposition was less interested in serving and re-building the existing labour movement than in replacing it with a new social movement under the leadership of this or that form of radical nationalism.

5. The conjunctural defeat of the labour movement in the 1940s was accompanied by a more profound and lasting defeat of socialist ideas as a material force within the working class. There were two 'external' causes of the crisis of South African socialism: the racial fragmentation of the

working class which accompanied the decline of the labour movement and the rise of confident and aggressive nationalist parties opposed to socialism. Over and above these considerations, however, were the defects of the actually existing socialisms of the time. Rather than resist the pressures toward nationalism, most socialists buckled under these pressures: the Communist Party because of the dynamics of its externally-imposed popular front policy, the trotskyist movement because of the incompleteness of its break from stalinism and the white labour left because of the incompleteness of its break from white labourism. Linking these different paths of transition from socialism to nationalism was a common problem of tying socialism to the democratic tasks of the South African revolution.

6. The rise of a radicalised african nationalism to the leadership of the democratic movement was not accomplished prior to 1948. It should be seen not as a natural progression of the liberation movement to a higher form of political consciousness but rather as the product of defeat: both of the conjunctural crisis of the workers' movement and the organic crisis of socialist politics. African nationalism reflected the racial fragmentation of the working class and the force of nationalist ideas emanating from the state. It empowered black people in a nationalist mode but it did not transcend the virulent growth of racial ways of thinking. It was not the case, as certain left critics of nationalism have argued, that african nationalism derailed the working class movement. Rather the derailling of the movement and the political collapse of socialism made possible the hegemonic rise of african nationalism. African nationalism was a definite

historical response to the crisis of socialism whose idealisation within socialist thought has been one index of the depths of its crisis.

In some respects socialists in the 1940s were well placed to foster the growth of the young labour movement. They were present at its birth; they were recipients of the ideas of socialism internationally; they had a heroic tradition of black resistance to white rule on which to build; they were linked to a working class whose forces were small but growing. They functioned in an increasingly proletarianised society and faced a ruling class whose capacity to govern was undermined by its deep imbrication in racial irrationalism. With the downturn of the class struggle in the latter half of the 1940s, socialists were put under intense pressure as the working class spontaneously fragmented into its 'national' component parts and radical black and white nationalisms seized the time to appeal to their respective sections of the working class. The inability of socialists to respond in a socialist way to these pressures represented the loss of a historical opportunity to lead the struggle for liberation.

Bit by bit, the space for building an independent working class movement was closed off; there was to be no easy road to re-building a socialist political culture in South Africa. Henceforth nothing could appear more natural than the notion that nationalism was the appropriate political form of the battle for democracy in South Africa. The failure of South African socialism to attach itself to the organic development of the proletariat, through both its defeats and victories, did not derive from the inherent

irrationality of socialist politics in a racially divided society but rather from the defects of South African socialism itself. Faced with terrible pressures, socialism was torn asunder by its own antinomies; between liberalism and revolutionary romanticism, stalinism and trotskyism, nationalism and 'pure' socialism. The historic role of social democracy, that is, the combined struggle for an independent working class movement and for the democratic reform of the state, was abandoned by South African socialists; either because they had not yet reached this level of political independence or because they prematurely imagined themselves to have transcended its limitations. Either way they lost sight of the protracted tasks of what might be called South Africa's proletarian reformation.

Ch. 7

The turn to mass struggle

The Afrikaner Nationalists were elected to government in 1948 on the basis of under 40% of the white and coloured vote and a majority of four seats. As the government of a fairly advanced capitalist state, the Nationalists were immediately impelled to find ways of adapting their disparate ideas on apartheid and their populist anti-capitalism to the realities of 'economic integration', that is, the dependence of capital on black labour. The directors of afrikaner businesses like Sanlam and Rembrandt could now acknowledge their 'economic consciousness' without having to cower before the accusations of emulating 'Hoggenheimer' (1), while Verwoed, the Minister of Native Affairs, re-assured the Chambers of Commerce and Industry that 'the implementation of apartheid would take account of economic reality', including the fact that 'a little less than one-third (of the african population) lives and works in the cities, of whom a section have become de-tribalised'. Holding the reins of political power, the Nationalists soon capitalised on their new status, eschewing 'outdated sentimentalism' and embracing the new religion of big business (2).

A question-mark hung over the stability of the new regime, as it sought to resolve in practice the tensions between ideologies of apartheid and the demands of capital. Sections of big business were wary of the costs that would fall upon them if access to cheap black labour in the urban areas were limited or the preference policy for expensive white labour were

expanded. Sections of the state machinery, especially in local government and the judiciary, were opposed to some of the key policies and procedures advocated by the Nationalists. Sections of the white electorate were not at all enamoured with the prospect of Nationalist rule. The Nationalists themselves contained deep political and ideological divisions within their own ranks, not least concerning the development of the reserves and the influx of blacks into the urban areas

Popular protest in the early 1950s

From below it did not take long for fragments of popular resistance to re-emerge in opposition to the new apartheid order. They had little cohesion but revealed that the base for mass struggle was still extant. In Port Elizabeth in April 1948 there was a month-long strike of 200 black laundry workers whose pursuit of higher wages involved them in fierce battles with the police and blacklegs; in 1949 there was a four-month long bus and train boycott against rising fares. There were rearguard actions in both the Trades and Labour Council and CNETU to keep independent trade unionism alive. In the TLC Solly Sachs, facing virulent attacks on his leadership from the Nationalists, including a series of libels in a Nationalist newspaper set up for garment workers, won re-election in 1950 to leadership of the Garment Workers Union with only 15 votes cast against him at a meeting of over 2000 delegates. In 1952 there was a strike among organised garment workers in protest against Sachs' banning from trade union work under the provisions of the 1950 Suppression of Communism Act. Bannings under the Act was also directed at the leadership of what was emerging as

the most solid of the black unions coming out of CNETU, the African Food and Canning Workers Union, which was fighting with some success to secure management recognition and wage increases through grass roots organisation among african and coloured workers. (3)

In the reserves there was bitter resentment at the Stock Limitation and the Bantu Authorities Acts. Stock limitation was presented by the state as a device for land betterment but its practical significance was the forced removal or slaughter of cattle belonging to african reservists. Bantu authorities represented, under the guise of re-furbishing traditionalism, a further attempt to subordinate african chiefs and headmen to the state administration. The sporadic emergence of intense and sometimes violent resistance was illustrated by the rebellion of the 'tribespeople' of Witziehoek in the Orange Free State in 1950, when they rose up against the culling of their cattle, the treachery of their state-appointed 'chief' and the brutality of the police (4). The depths of feeling shared by the reservists as well as the severity of government counter-measures was revealed in one battle in which two policemen were killed and 16 wounded, 13 africans were killed, up to a hundred wounded and 75 subsequently brought to trial. In the Ciskei, too, where the effects of land shortage were particularly acute, there was deep resentment against the 'rehabilitation' measures. Tom Lodge has recorded the complaints of members of the Ciskei Bunga of an 'ugly spirit of hostility' among the youth. The annual reports of the Native Affairs Department wrote of considerable organised opposition to cattle culling and Bantu authorities and of serious retardation of their plans due to 'malicious agitators' (5).

The extension of the pass laws to africans previously exempt in the freehold locations of Alexandra, Sophiatown and Benoni was opposed in bloody battles between the police and the residents. These came to a head in 1950 during a number of municipal tram and bus boycotts and then during the May Day stay-away. With the leaking of government proposals to tighten up controls over the movement of women to towns and the speech of the Minister of Native Affairs blaming the deterioration of the conditions of 'natives in the cities' to the presence of women who 'leave their homes contrary to the wishes of their fathers or guardians and contrary to tribal custom', a spate of protest demonstrations broke out among african women in many urban centres. With the tightening of influx controls in 1952 under the Native Laws Amendment Act and the absurdly-called Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act, protests from african women turned in at least one case in the Odendaalsrus district into a major riot (6).

Newspapers of the time were replete with stories of discontent among african farmworkers on white farms over the virtual serfdom to which they were subjected. Their average wages were well below those even of black mineworkers, which were themselves well below those of industrial workers, and their conditions of service were desperately servile, lacking even the rights of legal contract held by black mineworkers. The expansion of employment possibilities in the towns provided an attractive escape route for farm labourers, so that it comes as no surprise that the predominant form of protest in the absence of collective organisation was individual desertion on a mass scale. The press carried numerous reports of labour

shortages on the farms and of farmers meeting their shortfalls only by means of prison labour.

Among coloureds in the Cape threatened with disenfranchisement, there was energetic opposition to their plummeting status. First, the Population Registration Act of 1950 presented the coloureds as a distinct racial group defined negatively in relation to the other racial groups; then the Nationalists called for segregation for coloureds in all spheres of social life, including residence through the Group Areas Act and marriage through the Mixed Marriages Act; and crucially in 1951 the government sought to disenfranchise coloureds under the Voters' Representation Bill, designed to remove them from the common voters roll and provide in its stead a separate voters roll for coloureds to elect three white MPs to represent their interests in parliament (7). Coloured radicals organised under the umbrella of the Franchise Action Committee (FRAC) a national campaign against the Voters' Representation Act and called a one-day 'political strike' on May 7 1951 in Cape Town under the slogan 'votes for all'. This was supported by many coloured and african workers, Basil Davidson writing that 'the strike was a marked success. In a tour of the industrial suburbs of Cape Town... I saw factory after factory with its gates fast closed' (8). The interests of coloured workers were deeply affected by protectionist job policies instituted by the government in favour of whites and they gave strong support to the strike. Some thousands of coloureds marched in protest on the House of Assembly, only to be violently repulsed by the police.

The campaign was taken up by the Torch Commandos, an amalgam of mainly white left-wing and British-patriot ex-servicemen. They organised two mass meetings on the 4th May 1951 in Johannesburg in which over 25,000 people participated, designed to protest against the government's threat 'to violate the spirit of the constitution' and to 'enforce an immediate General Election'. Later that month, in what was known as the 'Steel Commando' drive to Cape Town, jeeps and vehicles from seventeen towns set off in convoy to meet in Cape Town on the 28 May. After an orderly demonstration outside Parliament, a violent clash with the police ensued in which about 160 people were injured. A Conference of Coloureds called for mass resistance, including strikes, in co-operation with other organisations and in opposition to all discriminatory legislation (9). The Torch Commandos were torn between half-baked insurrectionary ideas on the one side and an alliance with the United Party on the other. The demand put by Torch for the government to resign was abandoned when Graaff and Oppenheimer for the United Party insisted that the United Party electoral machinery was in no position to organise a General Election. This predicament became more marked after a formal pact was concluded in April 1952 between the Torch, the Labour Party and the United Party, known as the United Democratic Front, to fight the coming election. When Kane-Berman for the Torch threatened a day of protest 'to bring the country to a virtual standstill', the United Party and the Labour Party immediately dissociated themselves, and when Gillie Ford, the Natal leader of Torch, raised the spectre of secession for Natal in an address to a crowd of about 35,000, the National Executive of Torch repudiated Ford's 'extreme' ideas. Nonetheless both FRAC and Torch were able to fuel the parliamentary and

legal campaign waged against the unconstitutional ways in which coloured people were being stripped of their political rights by the government.

For the popular movement the early 1950s was a period not only of fragmented revival but also of the revival of fragmentation. The most expressive instance was the race riot in Durban in 1949 in which an african crowd attacked the indian community leaving 142 people dead, 1087 injured and vast numbers of homes and stores looted and burnt. Fed by what Shula Marks has identified as 'a Zulu nationalism focussed around the Zulu monarchy, exploitative relations between African workers and the Indian petty bourgeoisie, state manipulated competition between African entrepreneurs and their Indian counterparts and a continuous stream of white invective against Indians' (10) - and we should add anti-indian sentiment within sections of african nationalism - it pointed to the deep racial splits which the decline of the labour movement left in its wake.

The radicalisation of the ANC

Both the Communist Party and the ANC, though for different reasons and in different ways, moved to the left in this period. In the ANC there occurred what has come to be known as its 'turn to mass struggle'. The old leadership headed by Dr. Xuma was ousted and in its place a more radical leadership was elected, including representatives of the Youth League like Mandela, Sisulu, Tambo and Jo Matthews. This change of leadership was significant but the radicalism of the break from the past has often been

exaggerated in the literature. The 'moderate' majority in the Youth League had considerably softened their views since the heady days of 1943-44. Men like Professor Matthews, Chief Lutuli, Dr. Molema and Dr. Moroka represented continuity with the liberal tradition of old. Men like Kotane and Bopape were Communist Party members who had been allies of the old ANC leadership against the radicals of the Youth League. Among the old guard it was only conservatives like Dr Xuma and the Rev Calata who excluded themselves and were to form the right-wing National-Minded Bloc. Among the youth, the 'extreme' Africanists in the ANC remained a faction outside the national leadership circles.

The ANC's adoption in 1949 of the Programme of Action indicated its shift to the left by committing the ANC to a course of direct action and mass mobilisation. The programme upheld the claim of the african people to 'self-determination', 'national freedom' and 'political independence', using the language of anti-colonialism but defining its content in liberal democratic terms of 'freedom from white domination,.. the right of direct representation in all the governing bodies of the country,.. and the abolition of all differential institutions,.. especially erected for Africans' (11). In some respects the Programme of Action reflected the specific aspirations of the african middle class, notably calling for 'the establishment of commercial, industrial, transport and other enterprises' by and for africans and mirroring the economic programme of afrikaner nationalism but with far less prospect of success. It called for a study of 'the economic and social conditions in the reserves,.. to devise ways and means for their development' but did not challenge the existence of the

reserves themselves. It called for 'the establishment of national centres of education... and of a national academy of arts and sciences', again mirroring the cultural programme of afrikaner nationalism, but not the desegregation of the state education system. It called for the creation of a national fund and a national press, but made no further proposals for the building of a mass political organisation.

With regard to african workers, the Programme limited itself to a call for 'the consolidation of the industrial organisation of workers for the improvement of their standard of living' and expressed the hope that development in the reserves and townships 'may give employment to a number of people'. It was a modest set of demands which held back from the 'extremism' of the africanists. The sharp edge of the Youth League's earlier radicalism was blunted along with the bitter edge of its racialism.

In strategic terms, the Programme of Action called for mass action, including 'the appointment of a council of action... to work for... the abolition of all differential political institutions the boycotting of which we accept... and to employ the following weapons: immediate and active boycott, strike, civil disobedience, non-cooperation... and plans for a national stoppage of work for one day'. These methods were too briefly stated to reveal much about the nature of the mass struggles conceived in the programme, but the important point was that the Programme paved the way for bolder political action than had been considered possible or desirable by the old guard of the ANC.

The call for a 'boycott of all differential political institutions' reflected the approach of the Unity Movement but became increasingly redundant as a strategy when the major differential political institutions, like the Native Representative Council, were abolished by the government. In spite of the moderation of its demands and the brevity of its discussion on action, the Programme represented a definite turning point for the ANC in its relation to the 'masses'. Its declared aim was that 'ultimately the people will be brought together by inspired leadership under the banner of African nationalism'. Before this aim could be realised, there was a rival banner also wooing the african working class and still to be contended with; the red flag of the battered but by no means beaten Communist Party. The ANC had turned to the masses but the masses had not yet turned to the ANC.

The Communist Party turns left

The new direction of the Communist Party reflected the wider left turn taken by the international Communist movement at the onset of the Cold War and the formation of the Cominform. In South Africa, far from the battle lines of Europe, the CPSA's turn to the left was postponed until after the 1948 election and afforded doctrinal expression in January 1950 when the report of the Central Committee to the National Conference of the CPSA launched upon a sharp critique of african nationalism and in particular the ANC (12).

In direct opposition to the Programme of Action of the previous year, which called for the african masses to rally behind the flag of african nationalism, the central committee countered that 'the class conscious proletariat cannot rally under the "national" flag of the bourgeoisie', since in its words:

There is a fundamental difference between their ultimate aims: the bourgeois leaders striving for the 'freedom of the market' under capitalism, the class conscious workers fighting for the overthrow of capitalism itself... The bourgeoisie of the oppressed nationality develop an interest in the perpetuation of national differences, even while fighting against the discrimination imposed on their national group... Class conscious workers, who wish to remove the grounds of hostility between the national groups, must strive to bring about unity

between the workers of the oppressing nation and the oppressed people and put an end to conflicting nationalisms. At most, the class conscious workers can enter into a united front with the national bourgeoisie (13).

With some exception being made for the indian petty bourgeoisie (doubtless related to the fact that the Communist Dadoo was President of SAIC), the black petty bourgeoisie in South Africa was castigated as being incapable of providing effective leadership. This was attributed to the insecurity of a class that was 'small, fragmentary, pinned down in the poorest areas, forced to use subterfuge... and starved of capital' and whose leaders were with few exceptions 'not a bourgeoisie but teachers, church ministers and professional men... employed in state or European-dominated institutions... handicapped by their dependent economic status' (14).

The central committee argued that the 'petty bourgeois' character of the nationalist leadership was reflected in its pre-1940s demand for a 'weighted' Non-European franchise but also that the radicalisation of african nationalism did not fundamentally change the ANC's middle class colouration. Referring to the 'evasiveness and ambiguity' of the Programme of Action, the Central Committee attacked its demand for the 'right of self-determination for the African people', arguing that it meant the right of political secession and therefore 'the dividing of South Africa into a "black" and "white" state - which would mean *apartheid*'. The report criticised the 'meagreness and crudity' of the economic demands of the Programme of Action, which contained only two

paragraphs pertinent to workers; one calling for 'the establishment of people's co-operatives' and the other for 'the consolidation of the industrial organisation of the workers as a wing of the National Liberation movement' (15). It argued further that 'because of its petty bourgeois character, its economic dependence on the white ruling class and its isolation from the workers, the leadership of the national organisations tends to take refuge in negative and defeatist tactics which, for mass consumption, are wrapped up in fierce-sounding revolutionary phrases' (16).

Picked out for special censure was the boycott policy which both the Unity Movement and the Youth League saw 'as the only "salvation" possible for the Non-European peoples'. It was argued - with some brazenness given the policy of the CPSA during the war - that a boycott could only be effective 'when the ruling class wants, must have co-operation, as in war', but in the circumstances of the time 'the ruling class itself wants to abolish the institutions concerned'. Far from arousing the people against oppression, the boycott movement was criticised as 'an onslaught on those Africans who do carry on active struggle' in these institutions. Instead of exposing appeasers and conciliators in these bodies and 'forcing them to carry out a militant line of action, the boycotters shout to all, militant fighters and appeasers alike, Withdraw!... The essence of the campaign is that the non-Europeans should turn their backs on political struggle... and in short accept segregation'. It was argued that 'behind this tendency to turn the back on the European' lurked a racialism which also affected

relations between the Non-European groups themselves: 'so that Africans, Coloured and Indians regard one another with suspicion.' It concluded that this racialism could only be averted by recognising the class alignments which cut across racial divisions.

The CPSA's left critique of the defects of african nationalism offered an important counterweight to current orthodoxies about the fusion of socialism and nationalism. Some aspects of its critique, however, were sectarian. For instance, the argument that the black middle class was too economically dependent on the state to provide effective political leadership, omitted to mention that some sections of the african middle class such as doctors and lawyers were not directly dependent on state employment and played a leading role in the ANC. Other leading figures in the ANC like Sisulu came from a working class background. Socialist parties like the CPSA also had strong middle class representation within their leadership and indeed any working class movement requires a coming together of workers and the radical intelligentsia. The key issue was not the sociological composition of the leadership of african nationalism but its political relation to the working class.

One passage in the report reduced the nationalist struggle of the aspirant black bourgeoisie to 'the liberty of squeezing profits out of the people', revealing little understanding of the great advance which 'bourgeois equality' would have represented for black workers as well. The right of self-determination for the african people demanded in the

Programme of Action, though posed in the language of national independence, explicitly did not mean the right of political secession but rather of a multi-racial democracy. Most important, the central committee failed to mention that it was the Communist Party itself which for most of the 1940s had allied itself with the old guard of the ANC on a patriotic programme of constitutional reform and the curtailment of illegal forms of direct action, so that one function of the report was to displace all responsibility for this strategy from the shoulders of the Communist Party and onto those of african nationalism.

The CPISA's critique was not presented in the name of socialism against the limits of african nationalism but rather in the name of revolutionary nationalism. It argued that the national liberation organisations had to be transformed into 'a revolutionary party of workers, peasants, intellectuals and petty bourgeoisie... in alliance with the class conscious European workers and intellectuals'. It saw such a party as distinct from the Communist Party 'in that its objective is national liberation, that is, the abolition of race discrimination, but it would co-operate closely with the Communist Party' (17). Thus while a socialist movement appeared as the appropriate political form for the struggle for socialism, the immediate struggle for national liberation appeared as the province of revolutionary nationalist leadership. This distinction was vital for the forms of organisation and activity which the party was to support, its effect being to divide artificially the democratic and socialist aspects of the struggle into two separate compartments; the former belonging to the terrain of

national liberation and the latter remaining within the fold of the Communist Party.

In spite of its criticisms, the central committee held the door open for an accommodation with the ANC. This was the note on which the report ended, arguing that 'no clear line' could be drawn between bourgeois and working class demands on issues like the pass laws, residential segregation, prohibitions on buying land, exclusion from employment or the colour bar generally, since they 'affect every section of the non-Europeans and therefore constitute national issues'. In contrast to earlier passages, it concluded that 'since the Non-European bourgeoisie is weak, no serious divergencies can develop between it and the Non-European working class'. The report did not make a coherent whole, but the sub-text of its last section spelt out the conditions under which an alliance between the ANC and the CPSA could be forged.

First, the struggle against racial discrimination must be related ideologically to the struggle against capitalism by 'showing that the colour bar is primarily a technique of exploitation'. Second, the ANC should emphasise 'the unity of interests that exists between the workers of all races', and so concede the establishment of a non-racial trade union movement not tied to african nationalism. Third, it was necessary to insure 'the dominant role of the class conscious workers in the national organisations' and so allow CPSA members to take leadership roles in the nationalist movement. Finally, 'the bourgeois elements

within the national movements' must no longer be allowed 'to attack without challenge the working class movement, to slander the Party, and to adopt a negative or hostile attitude to the international working class forces', by which were presumably meant the Soviet Union and the Cominform.

These conditions for unity with the national liberation movement were a far cry from the fundamental critique of bourgeois nationalism with which the central committee started. The two wings of CPSA policy were unintegrated. Was there to be an independent movement led by the working class with no more than temporary united fronts with existing national liberation organisations or a fusion of nationalist and working class politics under the banner of nationalism? In 1950 the relation between the Communist Party and the national liberation movement was unresolved.

The CPSA was committed to a leading role in the liberation movement. It acknowledged that the organisational strength of the party left much to be desired, saying that 'we have not made the progress we should have during the last few years. It is therefore necessary to take stock of the position realistically. We cannot bluff ourselves' (18). Nonetheless it claimed that 'the Party organisation has remained intact... Our prestige has grown. The people are turning to the Party in ever increasing numbers... The African membership is increasing by leaps and bounds' and it concluded on the note that 'the prospect of building our party into a mighty weapon capable of leading the masses in their

struggle is excellent'. The CPSA in fact comprised in 1950 under 2000 members, including at least 1200 africans, 900 whites, 2500 indians and 150 coloureds. The party resolved to 'set the pace for the national movement by taking positive action on concrete instances of race discrimination such as the industrial colour bar'.

May Day 1950

The first attempt of the CPSA's to implement this resolution came with its call, supported by the Transvaal ANC, for a stay-away on May Day 1950 in protest against the Suppression of Communism Act and in support of higher wages. Within the ANC, on the left around the Youth League and on the right around the National Minded Bloc, there were many who opposed the call. May Day was a day in the calendar of the international working class movement rather than african nationalism. Most important, the stay-away was read as an attempt by the CPSA to challenge the hegemony of african nationalism. In spite of this opposition, the CPSA's initiative met with considerable success in the Johannesburg area where it was called. The costs, however, were high. In a number of townships fierce fighting with the police broke out, in which it is estimated that about 19 workers died and 38 were injured. There were severe reprisals from the employers and many activists were arrested and lost their jobs. Within the ANC response was mixed.

The CPSA's role was roundly denounced by the right-wing of the ANC and encountered hostility among some of the Youth League militants who feared that it was seeking to rally the masses behind the banner of communism. An editorial by Jordan Ngubane, who was later to join the Liberal Party, in *Inkundla ya Bantu* attacked the Communists for 'stampeding our people into the May Day demonstrations' as part of a campaign 'engineered by Communists to advance the cause of Communism and not of the oppressed African' (19). He portrayed the stay-away as a rash action resulting in 'the loss of African life without advancing the cause of Africa'. By contrast the response of the ANC National Executive was to offer an exaggerated appraisal of the stay-at-home as a complete success and call its own own stay-at-home on June 26 as a day of mourning for those killed. It received the support of the CPSA and with only two weeks notice to prepare the strike, critics again accused the ANC of an adventurism incited by the Communists, as evidenced in this letter to Professor Matthews from the Rev. Skomolo:

Through the May Day strikes, our people lost lives, properties and jobs, and have had no redress. Before these wounds are healed, we are again formulating another strike. The nation is not ready... We have to retreat according to plan and organise. That is strategy... If we are at the mercy of the Communist Party, take it from me, the Congress hasn't got another year to live. (20)

The actual results of the second stay-away were uneven, poor in the industrial heartlands of the Transvaal but stronger in the Eastern Cape

and Natal. In Durban thousands of workers lost their jobs as a result of their participation. Sisulu called it an 'outstanding success' but the ANC's own report was more circumspect on its limitations. Many workers were exhausted by May Day and the reprisals which followed. According to one of the organisers cited by Lambert, 'there was a hell of a lot of intimidation and had its great effect. People were licking their wounds. We had made a great effort for the May Day strike. This one followed too quickly. You can't just call the people out, you have to organise for it' (21). It was perhaps asking a lot of relatively disorganised workers again to risk their lives, liberties and livelihoods for the sake of what was purely a demonstrative action. Whatever the strengths and limitations of the stay-aways as a specific form of mass mobilisation, they showed that under the right conditions substantial sections of the working class were prepared to take action and were a further sign, over and above the many local forms of protest outlined earlier, of what working class mobilisation could achieve even in this period of mounting reaction (22).

The Communist Party 'dissolves'

On 20 June 1950, six days before the second stay-away, the CPSA formally dissolved itself. Shortly beforehand the government had announced the introduction of the Unlawful Organisations Bill, later to be changed to the Suppression of Communism Act. The bill was designed to outlaw all political activity deemed to fit into a widely defined category of 'communism' and give the state executive great powers of discretion.

independent of any judicial review, in applying the law. The view adopted by the CPSA central committee at the time was that the dissolution was the result of state attacks, its decision based on the recognition that 'the day the Suppression of Communism Bill becomes law, every one of our members, merely by virtue of their membership, may be liable to be imprisoned without the option of a fine for a maximum period of ten years' (23). Theoretically self-dissolution was not the only option available. The alternative put forward retrospectively by the SACP in 1962 attributed the decision to dissolve to the 'legalistic illusions' which had 'penetrated into the ranks of the Party, including its leading personnel' and argued that it was because of this legalism that the Party had been unable to work underground: 'these errors culminated in the dissolution of the Party (24).

Other CPSA commentators have taken a less critical view. Jack and Ray Simons presented the dissolution in tactical terms, writing that while 'deep seated loyalties, communist tradition and fierce contempt for the oppressor urged them to defy, could the party make the transition to illegality without being annihilated? (25)' The party could not be expected to move from legality to illegality overnight. Moses Kotane endorsed the view that there was little alternative to dissolution at that stage, since the party could not go underground with the sort of membership which it had, 'many of whom were totally unequipped both ideologically and practically for illegal struggle' (26).

According to Michael Harmel (27), CPSA leaders moved in at least three different directions: a minority opposed to dissolution, those in the tradition of the Browderites in the 1940s who 'had come to doubt the need for the very existence of the independent Marxist-Leninist Party', and an insurrectionary current calling for the withdrawal of Communists 'from all public activities in such mass organisations as were still legally permitted to concentrate on the underground'. The broader party membership outside the Central Committee seems to have been afforded no voice in the decision, the first the members heard of the decision to dissolve their party being the announcement in parliament. According to Sunting, 'the majority of the Party members were convinced that the dissolution was merely a ruse' (28). It is an interesting footnote that the judge presiding over a case to determine whether the CPSA still existed at the time of the passing of the Act and therefore whether it was still subject to state liquidation, found that the CPSA was not legally dissolved since according to its own constitution it was bound to call a national conference to dissolve itself. (29)

In the event none of these perspectives was followed in practice. By 1953, the party was re-constituted in secret. It did not declare its re-birth as an underground organisation, its members working exclusively through the medium of the national liberation movement. Through the 1950s the Communist Party continued to function behind the scenes and without a public identity. Between June 20 1950 and July 14 1960 no statement was issued in its name, even though for at least seven of these years the party was active and organised. An official history has

declared that 'it was understood by everybody that statements in the name of one or other known Party leader represented the "party line" on the issue under discussion' (30), but at the time it was re-iterated to critics of the CPSA in the national liberation movement that there was no secret organisation in existence and no hidden agenda. The Communist Party did not abandon the political stage to african nationalism but played its own definite role in nationalist dress. It was perhaps not surprising, given its ambiguous role, that the Communist Party was to generate all kinds of wild suspicion concerning what it was doing.

The Defiance campaign

Although the ANC turned to mass struggle in 1950, it was not yet a mass movement and for two years after the 1950 stay-aways it engaged in little activity nationally or locally. It was suffering from an acute financial crisis, it had no national newspaper of its own, there was little co-ordination at the national level and it was beset by internal divisions culminating in the expulsion of the conservative National Minded Bloc. In this context, the Defiance Campaign of 1952 has been generally recognised as a vital step first in winning mass support behind the banner of african nationalism (from a small organisation of at most some 7000 members, the ANC was said to have dramatically grown by the end of the Defiance Campaign to some 100,000 members), in implementing the Programme of Action and in cementing links between the different nationalist organisations. The campaign has been seen in this light as a crucial moment in the making of the modern national liberation movement. On the other hand, none of the reforms it set out to achieve were won and the surge of new members who entered the ANC rapidly departed after the campaign had been called off. By the end of 1953 the ANC claimed a total membership of some 28,000, but judging from its accounts its paid-up membership was back to around 7000. As one anonymous Congress writer put it, 'the building of the organisation did not correspond to the enthusiasm the campaign had aroused... As a result we did not consolidate our gains' (31). With these conflicting images in mind we need to re-assess the political significance of defiance.

The immediate aim of the campaign was to bring about certain specific democratic reforms, namely the repeal of six 'unjust' laws which the nationalists had introduced or re-inforced since 1948; the Pass Laws, the Group Areas Act, the Suppression of Communism Act, the Voters' Representation Act, the Bantu Authorities Act and the Stock Limitation Policy. It sought to win these reforms by generalising at the national level the sectional struggles waged locally in the early 1950s. The idea was to draw into one national campaign, directed centrally at the government, the disparate grievances of the people. The method was spelt out by Jo Slovo, a leading member of the Communist Party, when he wrote some years later:

Until the isolated grievances and the spontaneous outburst are canalised into an organised realisation of the possibilities of sweeping away the unjust system, the powers that be will continue to have things their own way... Thus the Defiance Campaign managed to create a drive throughout the country around a common plan. It managed to link up all the current grievances and all isolated struggles into one national movement which aimed at sweeping away some of the more basic discriminatory legislation... It succeeded in linking up the general aims with more specific and immediate local grievances... (32)

According to the Planning Council, the first stage of the campaign was to comprise civil disobedience by select volunteers who were to refuse to carry passes, defy 'European-only' signs in public places, enter restricted areas without a permit, etc. In the second stage, the number of volunteer corps as well as the number of centres of operation were to be increased until the campaign clogged up the judicial and

administrative machinery of the state. The third and climactic stage was to involve mass participation, during which industrial action - described as 'the best and most important weapon in the struggle of the people for the repeal of the unjust laws'(33) - would combine with political protest on a country wide scale. The organisers were of the view that 'lawful industrial action should not be resorted to immediately'.

The campaign was designed to be non-violent throughout, with reference being made to both christian pacifism and the 'soul-force' or 'Satygraha' of Ghandi. Their main perspective on fighting for reforms was through winning a change of heart on the part of the rulers when confronted by the power of moral argument and example. The organisation of the campaign was put in the joint hands of the ANC and the South African Indian Congress, symbolising the unity of national groups in a common struggle against apartheid, and volunteers were also to include coloured and white contingents.

Viewed in relation to the 1950 stay-aways, the Defiance Campaign represented a step back from working class participation. The lesson drawn by the political leaders from the June 26 stay-away was to question the readiness of the masses for action. This was not unreasonable given the low level of organisation of the working class and the problems of adventurism which had been expressed in 1950. The manner in which the ANC, however, chose to prepare the masses for action

was not so much through trade union and community organisation nor through supporting the local protests which were taking place, but rather through exemplary action on the part of the leadership to raise the consciousness of the masses. Thus for the two years between 1950 and 1952 the main focus of activity within the ANC was on planning for Defiance rather than on working class organisation.

National direction was needed to co-ordinate local struggles in order to link 'the general aims with the more specific local grievances'. As a condensation of sectional or local struggles, however, the Defiance Campaign tended to substitute for them rather than integrate them into a whole. As a reform movement the Defiance Campaign was criticised from the sectarian left, especially those in the Unity Movement who identified all struggles for reform with reformism, for its illusion that reform was possible under apartheid. The real problem, however, was not that the ANC demanded particular reforms - which was in fact its strength - but rather the manner in which the battle for reform was waged. Its perspective was not so much to deploy pressure from below as to incite a 'moral re-awakening' from above. Leo Kuper has ably summed up the liberal presuppositions behind this view when he wrote that 'in a country with traditions of representative governing institutions, the possibility of the inner conscience being pricked always existed, and that therefore our mass pressure and world opinion might be heeded even in South Africa' (34). The approach, as he put it, was founded on the belief that 'allegiance owed to God' might prevail over 'duty to Caesar'. Such an approach might have had more purchase in a formally

liberal-democratic polity like that of the USA, but under the apartheid state conditions were unfavourable. There was nothing wrong in seeking to persuade even the most obdurate racists of the error of their ways, but an orientation toward reform which depended on the moral enlightenment of the rulers rather than on mass organisation, was on shaky foundations in South Africa.

The limits of this perspective were illustrated by the exchange of letters between Moroka and Sisulu for the ANC and Dr Malan, the Prime Minister, which took place during the preparation for the campaign. Moroka and Sisulu informed Malan of the plight and restiveness of africans, warning that if the Government did not cease from degrading the african people and denying them basic human rights, then the ANC would proceed with its defiance plan. The extension of democracy and liberty, they said, was vital to africans and they were determined to achieve them 'in our lifetime' (35). In reply the Prime Minister's office rebuked the Congress officials for being so 'presumptuous' as to communicate directly with the Prime Minister instead of the Minister of Native Affairs and declared that the call for the repeal of differential laws was 'self-contradictory' because 'the Bantu differ in many ways from the Europeans' and that it should be 'borne in mind that these differences are permanent and not man-made'.

The ANC's offer of co-operation was seen by Malan as 'an attempt to embark on the first steps towards supplanting European rule'. The Prime

Minister reminded the Congress leaders who wielded repressive power in South Africa and warned that 'should the ANC proceed with its ill-advised campaign, the government would not hesitate to use the full machinery of the state'. The ANC leaders pursued their correspondence with the government, explaining that the issue was not one of biological differences but 'one of citizenship rights which are granted in full measure to one section of the population, and completely denied to the other by means of man-made laws artificially imposed not to preserve the identity of Europeans as a separate community but to perpetuate the systematic exploitation of the African people' (36). The government was moved not an inch, except to prepare for repression.

The method of deliberate violations of the law, committed in public by volunteers who offered themselves to the police for arrest, represented a more militant approach than the legalism which characterised the ANC and CPSA for most of the 1940s, but it also perpetuated a fetish of legality in a new form. For black workers, whose very conditions of life entailed constant defiance of the law as a pre-requisite of survival, the essential point was to avoid detection. Since for volunteers the point was to court arrest, workers and volunteers had different relations to the same unjust laws (37). As the Hungarian marxist, Georg Lukacs put it, 'where it is resolved to break the law with a grand gesture, this suggests that the law has preserved its authority - admittedly in an inverted form - that it is still in a position inwardly to influence one's actions' (38). In the process of defiance, most workers could only be spectators even while in their thousands they

often lived, moved and worked illegally. In his plans for the campaign, Professor Z.K. Matthews said that he wanted to organise this mass of individual illegalities into a broader collectivity but the purpose of the campaign was not so much the building of working class collectivity but rather exemplary defiance of the law by a select band of volunteers.

The latent weaknesses in the campaign came to the surface when some black workers failed to follow the blueprint and wait their turn before taking action. This was the case in the Eastern Cape which played a major role in the campaign itself, accounting for 5941 resisters out of a national total of 8326 (39). In Port Elizabeth a series of lightning strikes occurred after employers refused to re-instate volunteers and a crowd responded to the killing of seven Africans by the police, not just by stoning the police themselves, but also by killing four otherwise uninvolved whites. In East London hut burning, assaults on government employees and the destruction of fences occurred in opposition to rural 'rehabilitation' measures in the Ciskei. Violent riots broke out in several urban centres. A crowd responded to the killing of at least eight black people by the police, after the police viciously attacked a legal and peaceful prayer meeting, by killing two bystanders and burning down a number of buildings, including a school and a church.

Workers were fired to express their own grievances - a testimony to the success of exemplary action - but not to accept the passive role at first expected of them. For the ANC and its allies, committed as they

were to non-violence, this was a critical development. The ANC and the SAIC accused the police of using agents-provocateurs to incite the people to violence, condemned the police intimidation which claimed black lives and issued a joint statement dissociating themselves from the violence. Later, after the turn to armed struggle, the commitment to non-violence was justified by the ANC on tactical grounds: africans were unarmed and 'psychologically unprepared' for violent struggle, while the government was 'armed to the teeth' and 'it was a notorious fact that the Boers are always ready and happy to shoot down Africans' (40). Since limited non-violent forms of struggle were still available, it was right to utilise them to the full. At the time, however, many within the ANC saw non-violence not so much as a tactic but as a deeply felt moral principle, its choice based not on instrumental grounds but on an ethical imperative that no end, however right, could justify violent means. A moral society could not be built on immoral grounds. Violence only begets more violence (41). The ethical argument offered a principled and coherent perspective but the tactical view that african workers were 'psychologically unprepared' for violence was less sustainable. Some workers were at least ready to defend themselves against the violence of the police and others only too ready to lay their hands on any white person in sight. When violence did break out, the leaders of the campaign were confronted with the dilemma that they wanted mass action to follow from exemplary acts of defiance but they did not want the violence associated with mass action and could find no way of generating the one without the other (42).

In the Eastern Cape the local ANC leaderships - which in Port Elizabeth was more in the hands of the working class than any other local area and which in East London was linked to a radical rural movement under Youth League leadership - responded in more militant fashion than the ANC nationally by calling for an indefinite general strike (43). The ANC nationally intervened to block this call and substitute a one-day protest strike. This had widespread local support but employers and the state were able to unleash an effective campaign of victimisation against leading militants. Fearing the growth of violence and of unplanned mass resistance, the national leadership sought compromise with the city authorities in Port Elizabeth against the opposition of local activists. At the national level it responded by cutting down on incidents of defiance, while the left-wing called for the development of the campaign into its second stage: mass defiance aimed at filling up and blocking the state's machinery of 'justice'. Mokgatle recalls in his autobiography his dismay over the caution with which the ANC recruited volunteers and turned away thousands of potential resisters:

I said to them in Mandela's presence that if they were serious and wanted to break the Apartheid machine, the right way to break it was to throw into its spokes, its wheels and all its parts everything they could - sand, rags, stones - to jam it. By that, I told them, I meant that hundreds and thousands of volunteers should flood police stations, courts and prisons. I told them, further, that their methods were not aiding the people but Malan's government. I said that their actions were like throwing things into a machine, then allowing the owner to disassemble it, clean it, sharpen it and put it together before

throwing in another thing. My advice was ignored. (44)

By the end of December, some 5000 volunteers had gone to gaol for periods of a week or months and some 8400 had been arrested. But the flow of volunteers was already a trickle before early in 1953 it was brought to an end by a government response, not of moral re-awakening but of repression. It passed the Criminal Law Amendment Act which introduced whipping and up to five years imprisonment for even minor offences if the law was broken for political reasons, and the Public Safety Act which effectively allowed the government to declare a state of emergency giving great powers to the executive. At this point, the supply of volunteers finally dried up. State repression was undoubtedly the immediate cause of the campaign's termination but the mass violence brought to the fore the underlying weaknesses of its conception and execution.

The key question facing the leadership was how to respond to the refusal or inability of workers to abide by the planned agenda. It is possible to discern three different perspectives emerging out of the confusion. The dominant current in the leadership responded to the violence of the masses by withdrawing from both mass struggles and from further acts of defiance which might trigger mass struggles. Behind this response lay the ANC's christian tradition of pacifism but there was also another factor concerning the role of the Communist Party which was far less visible on the surface.

In late 1952 and early 1953 all Communist Parties still under the influence of the Soviet Union, embarked upon a new turn: away from the 'left' period which was introduced in 1947-48 with the formation of the Cominform and toward a new period of popular frontism. Thus from about September 1952 Stalin began to speak of 'peaceful co-existence' with the west rather than 'cold war' and after his death in 1953 this turn was consolidated. In South Africa leading Communists had early in 1952 given their support to the defiance campaign in accord with the general left perspective of the party at the time. Thus in his presidential address to the Indian Congress in January 1952 Dr Dadoo, a leading Communist, stated that the plan for defiance did not arise exclusively from the situation in South Africa, but rather 'the plan cannot be divorced from the most serious question which faces the whole of humanity, the question of peace or war. If indeed it were so divorced - and it is not - the plan would be unreal and most certainly ineffective'. In his presidential address to the Transvaal ANC, J B Marks, a leading Communist, called for a mass campaign to halt the Korean war and those who would plunge the world 'into the greatest blood-bath to satisfy their lust for profit and power'. The war-mongers were the colonial powers who oppressed the people of Africa. Against them he issued the call: 'Defeat those who plan the new war and we will have defeated those who administer our oppression' (45). In contrast, by late 1953 the South African Communist Party had changed its line. Leading Communists like Marks, Kotane and Dadoo were all calling for a United Party victory in the coming elections and downplaying any action which might alienate middle class opinion.

There was a minority opposition which idealised the spontaneous militancy of the masses with little regard for organisation or the forces they confronted. Jo Matthews' letters to his father, Z.K. Matthews, the initiator of the campaign who was in America for its duration, offer a vivid glimpse of this youthful spontaneism (46). During the encounters in the Eastern Cape he wrote that 'we are in the midst of a decidedly revolutionary situation' and 'we are a sort of government now'. When leaders were arrested or banned, he scorned the capacity of the state to damage the movement: 'the government has completely misread the mood of the people. This seems to be that the campaign can be headed off with the arrest of a few leaders... Such an attitude does not take account of the political consciousness of the masses. I have complete faith in the ability of Africans to produce the necessary leadership'. This view was reflected in the call for a national stoppage of work at a youth rally in Alexandra in February 1953 well after the potential unleashed by defiance had been exhausted (47).

Finally there were individuals who sought to turn the campaign into a springboard for trade union and community organisation. This view was evident in the local leadership in the Eastern Cape and was afforded some political expression. Writing in 1953 in *Viewpoints and Perspectives* Dr Roux argued that the campaign would have been 'more effective if it had the direct backing of... trade union organisations, and other contributors expressed their concern about 'the apathy of the trade union movement', calling for a focus of 'working class forms of organisation and struggle' (48). One contributor, a Dr Sanders, noted

that Port Elizabeth had produced about three quarters of the volunteers in the country and argued that this was mainly due to 'the relatively highly organised state of the workers. The unions there are long and well established and so effective political action en masse becomes possible' (49).

The campaign won none of the reforms it sought. As the ANC and SAIC with Communist support retreated from its initial radicalism into the quest for a broad democratic front against the Nationalists in the 1953 elections, the membership of the ANC soon declined from its peak of 100,000 to a figure around 28-29,000, many of whom appear not to have paid their dues. Working class organisation hit a trough, including most of the sectional struggles which preceded defiance. Notwithstanding its visible failures, Nelson Mandela, then President of the ANC in the Transvaal, strongly defended its achievements:

Defiance was a step of great political significance. It released strong social forces which affected thousands of our countrymen. It was an effective way of getting the masses to function politically; a powerful method of voicing our indignation against the reactionary policies of the government. It was one of the best ways of exerting pressure on the government and extremely dangerous to the stability and security of the state. It inspired and aroused our people from a conquered and servile community of yesmen to a militant and uncompromising band of comrades-in-arms. (50)

Mandela's response to the defeat of the campaign, his so-called 'M-

Plan', was to re-organise the ANC on a cell system, designed according to Jo Matthews to 'prepare for the continuation of the organisation under conditions of illegality' (51). Outside of Port Elizabeth it does not seem to have been implemented.

Compared with the 'delegation-orientated', racially exclusive and middle class politics of the old-style African nationalism, the Defiance Campaign undoubtedly represented a major advance for the ANC and certainly proved capable of releasing strong social forces. Mandela's account, however, while addressing the problem of repression from above, failed to grapple with the class conflicts brewing from below. Though absent from the language of African nationalism, class relations were nonetheless real in their effects. Working class organisation was subsumed to exemplary action, working class power to moral suasion and working class solidarity to non-violence. Fearing the irrational violence of the mob as a Frankenstein let loose by the non-violent and disciplined defiance of the volunteers, the leadership of the ANC recoiled from mass mobilisation and from any act of defiance which might provoke further confrontation. The Communists recoiled for their own externally-induced reasons. The more radical minority of the ANC romanticised the violence of the mob as a revolutionary force but stopped there. There was a 'third road', which embraced neither the liberal pacifism of the majority nor the revolutionary romanticism of the minority but working class organisation in order to build a more powerful reform movement from below. This road was not ruled out in advance but the political forces supporting it were marginal.

Ch. 8

Re-structuring the liberation movement

The Communist Party re-forms

We have argued that the political reason for stepping back from confrontation at the turn of 1952 to 1953 lay not only in the response of African nationalism to the violence of the masses but also in the new turn taken by the Communist Party which coincided with this response. As the Communist Party began to re-group underground in 1952-53, it followed the general line of the Cominform in reverting away from its left turn in the 1948-1952 period and toward a renewed search for a broad democratic front. What this meant in practice was support for the victory of the United Party in the 1953 elections on the one side and a downplaying of confrontational politics that might alienate liberal middle class opinion on the other.

The language of 'the nation' displaced the language of class. In *Viewpoints and Perspectives* Michael Harmel, the former chairperson of the CPSA, put forward the 'two nation theory' which was to provide the foundation for the the Party's strategic approach:

The relationship between the white rulers of South Africa and the non-white masses is essentially imperialistic... There are two nations in South Africa occupying the same state, side by side in the same area. White South Africa is a semi-independent imperialistic state; black South Africa is its colony. (1)

Harmel's definition of a 'colony', in line with the Cominform's position at the time, was sufficiently expansive to include West Germany and Britain as colonies of USA. His strategic conclusion for South Africa was to support a two-stage struggle. The first stage was defined in terms of national freedom from colonial domination, a stage in which it was not deemed desirable to 'foster and develop the proletarian element of the liberatory movement'. Socialism and working class forms of struggle were postponed to a second stage after the achievement of national liberation. For the present, Harmel argued, class politics were excluded since 'African workers are not yet class conscious' and 'one cannot have a class movement if there is no class consciousness'. On the African Liberatory Movement, Harmel's verdict was that:

it is not dominated by the unstable and politically treacherous elements which have led similar movements elsewhere. It is a movement of workers and peasants, professional people, middle and commercial classes, in which the progressive working class tendency plays an increasingly influential role. (2)

The class-based criticisms of the national liberation movement put forward during the CPSA's left period in 1950 were put well behind by 1953. As one small instance, to a paper on rural struggles Jo Slovo made the objection that its perspective 'suggests that the proletarian is going to lead the struggle'.

The subordination of class politics to nationalism was resisted by some contributors to *Viewpoints*. A certain Dr Hathorn, for instance, argued that:

the fact that the ruling class is composed almost exclusively of Europeans and that the Africans compose the bulk of the working class, subjected to racial discrimination and oppression to boot, does not affect the conclusion that this is a class society and that it is a class struggle that is being waged... The attempt to identify the position in South Africa with the movements of colonial liberation in other parts of the world in every respect is mistaken. It is this incorrect orientation which has tended to play down the role of trade unions and other worker organisations. (3)

It was one thing for the Communists to identify state racism as a key target of the struggle, but quite another to elevate it as the *exclusive* target at this stage of the struggle, or to project a national rather than a socialist movement as the appropriate means of fighting state racism, or to idealise the existing nationalist movements as adequate to those tasks. Such, however, was the emerging view.

The cause of the South African Communists' 'turn' in 1952-53 appears to have had as much to do with Moscow's change of line as with internal developments in South Africa. From 1953 the Cominform affirmed that Communist Parties would not challenge the leadership of the bourgeoisie in national struggles or fight for an alternative leadership by the working class (4). This view was summed up under the label of the 'national democratic' strategy. Potekhin, Moscow's leading ideologue on African affairs, argued that opposition to imperialism 'cannot avoid involving the national bourgeoisie as well' and further that in the

anti-colonial stage of 'the struggle against imperialist enslavement' the interests of the bourgeoisie coincide with those of the entire people... The leading role of the national liberation movement... is now performed by the national bourgeoisie and the national intelligentsia. (5)

From the premise that the national bourgeoisie was inevitably involved in the fight for independence, Potekhin concluded that there was an identity of interests between the national bourgeoisie and the working class and that therefore socialist criticism of the bourgeois character of national liberation movements was ruled out. In assessing the economic tasks of liberation, emphasis was put on the flowering of the national bourgeoisie through the development of private capital and state nationalisation on the formalistic grounds that 'with a strong bourgeoisie, there is a strong proletariat' (6). The political tasks of liberation were characterised in non-class terms: the creation of a state reflecting 'the interests not of any one particular class, but of the widest strata of the population of the newly-free nations' (7).

In South Africa Rusty Bernstein wrote in a paper called 'The role of the bourgeoisie in the liberatory struggle' that

the working class cannot fight alone. It must fight with its allies and its allies are to be found in these broad petty bourgeois strata amongst the peasantry, the professionals, the petty traders and shopkeepers who though lacking the unity of interests and aims of the proletariat can yet be won for whole hearted alliance in common action with the proletariat. (8)

The struggles of the oppressed began to be couched in terms of 'internal colonialism': whites appearing as a colonial nation and blacks as the colonised. It was a 'special type' of colonialism since both the colonising and colonised nations occupied the same territory. Nationalism became the language and banner of communism. Formally, the slogan of 'national democracy' represented a self-denying ordinance for Communists, which declared in the name of 'unity' that Communists must not alienate the middle classes of the 'colonised' black people by putting forward socialist demands specific to the working class. The assumption behind this perspective was that the working class would not itself be alienated from a movement which tailored its demands to the cloth of the middle classes.

The specific problem with this perspective in South Africa, in contrast to most 'normal' colonial contexts, was that first the great majority of the people oppressed by apartheid were working class and second in the ordinary sense of the term the colonial question had long since been resolved by the withdrawal of British imperialism. The idea of the 'national democratic revolution' glossed over actual and potential class antagonisms within the liberation movement, between a national petty bourgeoisie interested economically in the emancipation of private property from racial restrictions and the mass of the working class interested in the inhibition of the power of private property. Between these social forces there was common ground in their desire for the abolition of apartheid but there were also differences and in some cases conflicts of interest over ends and means.

In the South African context, in which the working class formed the mass of the population, the instrumental consequences of subsuming working class interests were bound to be more severe than in colonial situations in which the working class formed a small enclave marginal to the great majority of peasants, independent artisans, traders, etc. Further, since the colonial question in the normal sense of the term had been resolved, the effect of the internal colonial model was to re-inforce a perception of the democratic movement in terms of ethnically-defined 'national' identities and antagonisms. By fusing the 'national' and 'democratic' aspects of the revolution into a single concept, the specificity of 'nationalism' as a particular form of expression of the democratic movement was lost from sight. It was as if the democratic revolution in South Africa had no choice but to be 'national' in form and content. In reality the persuasiveness of this argument hung on the political decline of socialist alternatives.

The multi-racial alliance

For the working class, the period after Defiance was one of relative quiescence. At the level of political leadership, however, major organisational changes were introduced which were to have a crucial impact on the democratic movement as a whole. There were moves to centralise the command structures of the ANC in the face of increased repression of extra-parliamentary opposition. In 1954 the National Executive Committee of the ANC analysed the situation thus:

It is quite clear that Congress cannot survive unless it changes its present structure. If it is not yet clear, it should be made abundantly clear to all concerned that the Nationalists are determined and mean to deprive us of... the elementary human rights of freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of organisation and freedom of movement. To be able to meet these stringent and hostile conditions, therefore, the Congress must be placed on an entirely new organisational footing... The organisation should be highly centralised on the national and provincial places but highly decentralised on the branch and membership levels. (9)

Sister-organisations to the ANC and the SAIC were set up in 1953 among Coloureds and Whites in the form of the South African Coloured People's Organisation (SACPO) and the Congress of Democrats (COD) respectively. Although both were formally open to members of all 'races', they were designed to organise people and to engage in political activity within their own 'national' groups. Thus by 1954 there were established four

'national' organisations claiming to represent the four 'nations' that together constituted South Africa. Former and current members of the Communist Party were allocated to their various 'national' organisations and the now covert Party strongly supported the organisation of the liberation movement in these terms.

The alliance between these national organisations was formalised by the establishment in 1954 of the National Action Committee (NAC) of the Congress of the People, as a temporary and ad hoc organising body for the production of the Freedom Charter, and then in 1956 by the establishment of the Congress Alliance as a long-term alliance of the four national organisations led by its National Consultative Committee (NCC) on which representatives from each of the four national organisations sat. The formal arrangement was that each of the component groups in the Alliance was to keep its autonomy intact with the Consultative Committee having no powers to intervene in the internal affairs of the separate national organisations. In addition to the four national organisations, the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) was also represented on the NCC. It is interesting that as a workers' organisation SACTU was the only truly non-racial affiliate. Its members, however, were enjoined to direct their political, as opposed to trade union, activity through one or other of the racially defined national liberation organisations.

The idea of 'multi-racialism' was given ideological underpinning by Communist theoreticians. The Soviet expert on Africa, Potekhin, wrote in 1956 a treatise on *The Formation of a National Community Among the South African Bantu*, putting forward the view that nationalism in general was a socialist sentiment compatible with or essential to internationalism :

In a socialist society, each person acknowledges a bond between himself and his nation and takes pride in this .. For the proletariat, national self-consciousness is one of the facets of an ideology of internationalism ... The nation provides a consciousness of unity ... a feeling of belonging. (10)

He argued that in South Africa there were four nations, or proto-nations since the Bantu 'were not yet united as a nation', which comprised the elements around which the nationalism both of the oppressors and oppressed necessarily circulated. Potekhin hedged his bets over whether there were rather only two nations in South Africa, the 'Anglo-Afrikaner' and the 'Bantu'. Multi-racialism was presented as the natural and rational form of organisation of the democratic movement in the South African context, reflecting the spontaneous consciousness of the masses who saw themselves, so it was said, or should have seen themselves first as africans, asians, coloureds or whites.

All of these innovations were hotly contested at the time of the Kliptown conference in 1955. Criticism came from a number of different quarters, but for the most part in this period debates were conducted among the political elites without immediate pressure coming from the working class. Consequently the debates were given far more intensity

later in the 1950s with the revival of working class struggle from below.

The drive to centralise the ANC was contested in the name of regional autonomy and democracy by some of the older leaders, particularly those outside the Transvaal. According to Karis and Carter, Lutuli privately threatened to resign as President-General of the ANC if the constitutional changes went ahead, saying that 'power must be shared or else you create dictators' (11). Declaring with reference to 'left elements' in the Transvaal that he was 'very uneasy about certain new trends or cliques in Congress', Lutuli repeated his threat to resign after the Congress of the People, if *inter alia* 'over-centralisation' was introduced. Professor Matthews also warned that 'too much centralisation... will kill the whole organisation' (12) .

The establishment of COD met with strong opposition from the Liberal Party which was formed the same year and was in direct competition for the support of anti-apartheid whites (13). The Liberal Party was united in its criticism of the influence of Communists in COD, which they saw as no more than a Communist front. The Liberals' anti-communism was coupled with a rejection by many, though not all, of its members of COD's commitment to extra-parliamentary protest and to universal, unqualified suffrage. On the other hand, the Liberal Party itself took members regardless of race and despite its conservatism rejected the *de facto* whites-only policy pursued by COD in regard to its membership and

sphere of political activity. Apart from the Liberals, there were a number of white socialists - including both Communists and trotskysant militants - who also rejected the idea that they should work in what was in effect an exclusively 'white' organisation confined to work among 'Europeans'. At least one well-known member of the Communist Party is reported to have resigned over the issue, arguing for one non-racial Congress. COD's policy of adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the exclusion of socialist demands was a related source of alienation for many socialists.

The establishment of SACPO also met with strong opposition from coloured radicals and trotskysts in the Unity Movement, who were not only in direct political competition with SACPO but rejected the idea that coloureds should be organised separately from other 'non-europeans'. From their point of view the coloured exclusivity of SACPO reflected the segregationist consciousness of the state in the heart of the liberation movement itself.

Regarding the ANC itself, opposition to its links with other 'national' organisations, as well as to a perceived growth of Communist influence within the ANC, came from two quarters. On the right, the National-Minded Bloc under the leadership of Selope Thema opposed the ANC's links with indians and whites, seen as nations with antagonistic economic interests to those of africans, and with Communists generally seen as drawing the ANC down a road of suicidal militancy. From the left, a more

potent and enduring critique came from Africanists under the leadership of ANC members like Potlako Leballo and Robert Sobukwe, opposed to what they saw as the subsumption of the revolutionary fervour of African nationalism to the liberal influence of 'multi-racialism'. The Africanists were becoming a powerful current in the ANC, with a key base in Orlando, and from 1954 issued their own independent journal called *The Africanist*. The Africanists' objections to the 'multi-racialism' of the Congress Alliance were elaborated in the course of the following years, as the limitations of Congress in the face of an upsurge in working class militancy became more apparent, so we shall reserve more detailed discussion till later. Within the ANC 'multi-racialism' was also questioned from the opposite vantage-point, not that of purified African nationalism but of non-racialism. Lutuli himself was reported to have shown signs of unease over 'multi-racialism', preferring the term 'non-racialism' and defining 'all-inclusive' African nationalism to embrace persons of all races who made Africa their home (14). In Lutuli's eyes multi-racialism seemed to be a necessary but regrettable and temporary expedient and support for this view came from the Natal executive of the ANC.

The Communist Party fully endorsed the structures and principles of the Congress Alliance, but a number of independent socialists within and outside of Congress questioned its 'multi-racialism'. Since the Congress Alliance was defined in racial rather than class terms, its class character was buried beneath the surface. Socialists had to be dispersed among the different organisations. Race not class was entrenched as both

the organising and ideological principle of the movement. Since each 'nationally' defined liberation organisation was meant to represent its nation as a whole and not merely one part of it, a strong emphasis was placed on downplaying what was seen as the sectional politics of socialism in favour of a broad national policy around which the vast majority of the 'nation' might coalesce. This in effect meant that a specifically working class political profile was self-consciously ruled out of the agenda of each of the national organisations.

The non-racial critics of 'multi-racialism' argued, first, that the fight against apartheid would be weakened if racial divisions were entrenched within the liberation movement itself; second, that the division of the liberation movement into four separate sections was necessarily wasteful of scarce resources; third that the subsuming of socialist to 'national' objectives would lead to the alienation of the great majority of black workers in South Africa; and fourth that while the leadership met one another in organisations like the National Consultative Committee which crossed communal lines, the rank and file were corralled in their own ethnic groupings.

An articulate example of this line of argument was offered by a small group outside Congress organised around a newspaper called *The Citizen*. They had this to say about 'multi-racialism' in 1956:

From the point of view of the democratic movement, it is impermissible to organise the people of South Africa along

racial lines or lines of legal stigma... It is anti-democratic to build up among the people a racial consciousness, whether that consciousness be 'Non-European', 'European', 'Coloured', 'Indian' or 'African'. In undertaking the struggle of the people against racial discrimination, we must break down and not build on the reactionary racial consciousness built up by the rulers ... The business of democrats is not to accept the racial illusions of the masses. (15)

What was needed instead, according to *The Citizen*, was a modern democratic movement based on the 'creation of a South African consciousness' and on an 'implacable hostility to racialism'.

A more practical expression of conflict over multi-racialism arose in the relationship that was forged between Congress and its women's organisations. There were two women's organisations within Congress, the ANC Women's League (ANCWL) and the Federation of South African Women (FSAW), each of which had its own perspectives on this issue deriving from their different origins.

The ANC Women's League had been formed in 1943 as part of the general radicalisation of the ANC, when women were for the first time granted formally equal status within the organisation. Its distinguishing feature was that it was set up as a wing of the ANC, subject to the discipline of the ANC leadership, designed to draw african women into the ANC and limited to the organisation of african women alone. As a

women's organisation its effectivity was restricted by the general level of consciousness within the ANC of women's specific oppression as women. This proved to be uneven. Men like Lutuli paid tribute to the 'effective part in politics' played by women and argued for equality between the sexes within the organisation of the ANC but more conventional views on the role of women were also expressed within the movement. Hilda Bernstein, at the time Hilda Watts, a leading member of the Women's Federation, described the ANC Women's League as 'a means of organising women for the national liberation struggle' and 'a means of obtaining the usual work out of the women - feeding and finding accomodation for delegates to conferences and similar work' (16). What Cheryl Walker called its 'tea and typing' function was part of the picture but the Women's League was also drawn into a more assertive defence of women's rights in the early 1950s under the pressure of the government's threatened extension of passes to african women and grass roots protests which followed.

The Federation of South African Women was set up in 1954 at the First National Conference of Women 'for the purpose of uniting all women in common action for the removal of all political, legal, economic and social disabilities' (17). The impetus behind it came from women closely connected with the emerging Congress Alliance and in particular from members of the Communist Party like Ray Alexander and Hilda Watts. It sought to combine the defence of women's rights with the larger national struggle against apartheid, declaring:

Whilst our main struggle is with men against racialism and the

colour bar, to make our national struggle more effective, we ask that men support us in our fight for equality. (18)

The Women's Charter, endorsed at the inaugural meeting, stressed the community of interest between men and women and between the national and women's struggles:

As members of the national liberation movements and trade unions ... we march forward with our men in the struggle for liberation. (19)

On the other hand, it also stressed the need to overcome the 'ancient and revered traditions' which had justified the subordination of african women, the refusal within the national liberation movement of 'a large section of our menfolk... to concede to us women the rights and privileges which they demand for themselves' and the attitude of many women who 'continue to be bound by traditional practices and conventions and fail to realise that these have become obsolete and a brake on progress'. The key idea was that the struggle to emancipate women formed an intrinsic part of any liberatory struggle: 'freedom cannot be won for any one section or for the people as a whole as long as we women are in bondage.' (20)

The fact that women organised as women, on women's issues and in opposition from the start to patriarchal attitudes within Congress, placed the Women's Federation in a position of some conflict with the Congress leadership, the first instance of which was over multi-racialism. A leading group of women in the Federation, led by the trade union organiser and Communist Party member, Ray Alexander, wanted the

Federation to be a non-racial body which any woman, regardless of race, could join as an individual. Alexander argued that if the Federation's membership were based only on affiliated organisations, it would exclude many women who were not members of these organisations. The Congress leaders strongly opposed individual membership, seen as a recipe for building a mass non-racial body in competition with its own nationally defined organisations and especially the ANC's Women's League. In Ida Mtwana's words, it would 'draw women away from the ANC' (21). The Congress view was finally accepted by the Federation. According to Walker, Ray Alexander and the supporters of individual membership conceded 'not because they had been convinced ... but because they realised that without the support of the ANC the women's movement would be isolated'. We may speculate that in addition to this factor the Communist Party members who led the Federation, like Ray Alexander, were under the discipline of the Party leadership which supported the 'multi-racial' approach.

The Congress of Democrats even objected to the Federation's right to adopt a constitution for itself before each of the Federation's national affiliates had first ratified it. The federal constitution of the Federation won it the support of Congress, but it also limited its scope for organisational development. This was compounded by the slow affiliation of Congress organisations to the Federation, which was not completed until April 1957, and by the failure of SACTU's preponderantly male unions, with the exception of Food and Canning, to affiliate. The Federation's access to working class coloured and Indian women was made

harder by the fact that few of them belonged to or supported the small 'national' organisations, SACPO and NIC, which were meant to represent them in Congress. The refusal of Congress to grant the Federation representation on its National Consultative Committee, on the grounds that it already had representation through each of its national organisations, meant that at the same time that Congress asserted its authority over the Women's Federation, the Federation was denied independent access to the main decision-making committee of Congress.

The formation of the Congress Alliance as a multi-racial alliance broke from the exclusivity and isolation of the african and indian nationalisms of old, but it also reflected and re-inforced the ethnic fragmentation of the working class on colour lines. The working class first had to be separated before it could then be brought together again through the mediation of the Congress leadership. In this multi-racial form of organisation, democratic decision-making was bound to become problematic and did in fact give rise to many suspicions as to who were really making decisions. Multi-racialism quadruplicated the requirements of organisation at a time when resources were scarce in the extreme. Most important of all, multi-racialism reflected the racial categories of the state within the democratic movement itself. All these problems were present in embryo at the time of the formation of the Congress Alliance but arose more urgently when what was at issue was how to respond to the upsurge in working class militancy in the latter half of the 1950s.

The Freedom Charter

If the organisational development of the Congress Alliance was the first aspect of the political re-structuring of the liberation movement in the mid-1950s, the second was the re-formulation of the aims of the liberation movement through the adoption of the Freedom Charter. In the aftermath of the Defiance Campaign there were moves to develop new goals to meet the threat of 'fascism'. Moses Kotane spoke of the need for a new initiative to unite 'the great majority of the people of this country against Fascism' and to open 'the way forward to a democratic South Africa' (22). He wrote of 'the absence of a great central political task common to all democrats' as 'a retarding factor during the past year'. At the time, the ANC did not have a clearly articulated ideology. The Programme of Action emphasised methods rather than goals; its political content was vague and inconsistently democratic.

It was within this context that at the Cape Provincial Congress of August 1953, Professor Z K Matthews first suggested the summoning of 'a national convention at which all groups might be represented to consider our national problems on an all-inclusive basis' and to 'draw up a Freedom Charter for the democratic South Africa of the future' (23). The purpose of the Congress of the People in Z K Matthews' original conception was to 'galvanise the people of South Africa into action and make them go over to the offensive against the reactionary forces at work within this country, instead of being perpetually on the defensive' (24). On March 23 1954 the

executives of the ANC, SAIC, OOD and SACPO met to discuss plans for the national convention. It was decided to establish a National Action Council consisting of representatives from the four national groups to organise the 'Congress of the People'. Provincial Committees were to be established and through them the recruitment of 'Freedom Volunteers' to publicise the Congress and collect demands for the Charter from ordinary people. The Provincial Committees were then to establish committees in every workplace, village and township to work out and send further demands to the NAC which would then collate them into a draft charter. The final stage would involve the election of delegates from each locality who would meet and assist in the adoption of the Charter at the Congress of the People.

As Walter Sisulu put it, 'the purpose is to get the people themselves, by means of a mass campaign in which they themselves participate, to say how they should be governed in the new democratic South Africa they are all striving for' (25). In a letter inviting the Liberal Party to participate, the NAC stressed that it did not intend:

to put a preconceived 'Charter' before the hand-picked 'Assembly'. We seek rather to canvass the entire country asking ordinary people everywhere in every walk of life, to say in their own words what they need to make them free and happy'. (26)

Unlike the ANC's 'Africans' Claims' of 1943, a document formulated from above by intellectuals and leaders at the behest of Dr Xuma, the Freedom Charter was intended to emerge from below as a reflection of the demands of the people. Both at the time of its formation and subsequently among heirs to the Congress tradition, the Charter has been presented as the authentic

'voice of the people', allowing 'ordinary citizens' to speak for themselves. Two recent commentators, Suttner and Cronin, have claimed that the Congress of the People was 'certainly the most representative gathering there has ever been in South Africa. It was a real people's parliament' (27). Some thirty years later the Freedom Charter still appeared as an immediate expression of the apparently unchanging will of the people, witness this recent assessment by Popo Molefe, the General Secretary of the UDF:

The Freedom Charter is a unique document, it was created by the people. It is not the vision of any one individual or group of individuals or any one organisation or group of organisations. It emerged from the dreams and ideas of ordinary people. The Charter is authoritative because of its birth. (28)

A more sceptical view of what actually transpired has been taken by the historian Tom Lodge:

The formulation of the Charter involved only a limited amount of consultation; certainly popular demands were canvassed but the ultimate form the document assumed was decided by a small committee and there were no subsequent attempts to alter it in the light of wider discussion. (29)

As a political campaign designed to mobilise people around a given ideological position, the campaign was a remarkable achievement which allowed the ANC and its allies to spread their political message. The historical evidence, however, does not support the further claim that the Charter simply emerged out of the dreams and aspirations of ordinary South Africans or that its authority can be based on this premise.

There were major difficulties in implementing the design, some of them beyond the capacity of the Congress Alliance to affect. State repression took its toll. *New Age*, for example, conceded that 'it would be foolish to deny that the plans for the Congress of the People had not suffered as a result of the Government's attacks. They have.' (30) . Bannings under the Suppression of Communism Act severely limited the activities of some of the most experienced activists, including nearly the entire executive of the Natal Indian Congress and leaders of the ANC like Lutuli, Sisulu and Tambo.

While the process of electing delegates at public meetings called in different centres was taking place in April 1955, sub-committees of the NAC began sorting out the various demands and suggestions that flowed in. In February 1955 *New Age* had reported with enthusiasm that 'demands for the Freedom Charter have been pouring into the headquarters of the Congress of the People. Simply phrased, they nevertheless touch on the most pressing needs of the people' (31). For months now, it wrote, 'the demands have been flooding to COP headquarters on sheets torn from school exercise books, on little dog-eared scraps of paper, on slips torn from COP leaflets'. It is difficult to assess this view since only few of the demands are available for scrutiny in the Karis-Carter Microfilms (32), but the enthusiastic claims of New Age should be contrasted with more cautious commentaries at the time.

In May 1955 a Directive issued by the National Action Council complained that 'not enough demands are flowing in' (33). Lutuli wrote in his

autobiography that 'the main disadvantage' in the preparation of the Charter 'was that local branches submitted their material for the Charter at a very late hour... too late in fact for the statements to be properly boiled down into one comprehensive statement. It was not even possible for the National Action Committee to circularise the draft Charter fully' (34). After the Congress was over, the NAC offered a highly self-critical report on its preparation:

We failed to set up an effective organisational machinery to make proper use of the Volunteers ... After the initial period, there was a lapse of time during which very little work was done ... The core of the leadership of the campaign was immobilised as a result of government bans... The people must be shown that there is a direct connection between the more long term aims of the Freedom Charter and their struggles and immediate threats. Your NAC and the four sponsoring organisations at no stage managed successfully to link COP with the day-to-day struggles of the people... Only a negligible number of local committees were set up. Our failure to do so resulted in the Congress of the People not being as representative as it might otherwise have been... It must be noted that the overwhelming majority of the delegates came from the main urban centres, that is, from areas where the Congress branch had been operating for many years... It was a concern that the movement... had not taken strong enough roots in the smaller towns and the vast and thickly populated countryside... Furthermore, only a minute proportion came from the factories and the mines. This fact illustrates the low level of trade union organisation amongst the workers. (35)

We receive here from the organisers themselves a rather different picture of events than the idealised image of the origins of the Charter allows.

Among the exhibits handed in to the court during the 1956 Treason Trial was one which was headed 'Freedom Charter: General Remarks'. It continued: This is only a first draft; no time to tie up some ends, I have in each section drafted a general clause of rights followed by the more particular detailed demands' (36). This document was unsigned but the draft is close to the final version of the Charter and indicates that an individual or a small group of individuals had a profound influence over the content of the Charter. Jo Slovo, a leading member of the South African Communist Party, has claimed to be one of the people responsible for drafting the Charter (37). How many others were involved and what political positions were held by those responsible for drafting remains an unanswered question. It would seem that a small drafting committee was eventually to produce the Charter, drawing on the material prepared by the sub-committees. The Charter was presented to seven members of the ANC's National Executive on the eve of the Congress of the People, but neither Lutuli (immobilised by his ban) nor Profesor Matthews saw it at this stage (38).

A statement by Moses Kotane, who had been General Secretary of the CPSA until 1950, published in May 1954 in *Advance* (the successor to the banned *Guardian*) and republished in a widely distributed booklet called *South Africa's Way Forward*, laid out the basic contours of what he thought the Freedom Charter should include if it was to be 'the faithful expression of

the voice of the people'. He wrote:

The people must write into this Charter their claim to equality of rights for all men and women. The people must proclaim through the Freedom Charter their demands; That freedom of speech, . . . movement, . . . association, . . . and assembly be guaranteed. That the rich farmlands, . . . be shared among their rightful owners, . . . That the big mining and other monopoly-owned industries . . . become the property of the people; That the working people be guaranteed by law their rights to free, recognised trade unions, . . . That urgent steps be taken to provide houses for the homeless, schools for the children and hospitals for the sick without discrimination, . . . These demands will be realised only when the basic colour bar structure of South Africa has been abolished and replaced by a people's democracy. (39)

Kotane's idea of a 'people's democracy', written before the Charter, was close to what was eventually written into this charter. The pre-suppositions of those who initiated the Charter were also suggested by an editorial in *Liberation* in March 1955, written by two leading Communists, Michael Harmel and Dan Tloome, emphasising that 'the demands, every one, reject the hated principles of apartheid and the colour bar and speak up for a conception of freedom and human rights broad enough to include everyone in South Africa of whatever race, colour or creed' (40). The authors seemed to feel that they knew what all right-thinking people would wish to demand.

The people were guided carefully in the framing of their demands. A letter, for example, of the Transvaal Provincial Committee of the Congress of the People of May 1955 contained the following:

The voice of the People must be heard demanding: the right to skilled work... the right move freely inside and outside the country... the right to live and own homes wherever we wish... the right to equal education... full and equal democratic rights.

(41)

Before volunteers organised meetings, they were given lectures on the significance of the campaign. The Midlands Regional Committee of the Congress of the People instructed its volunteers as follows: 'It is essential for each and every volunteer to attend these lectures where they will be trained to understand, analyse and correctly assess the local and national situations... so that they will be able to give the correct lead to the people'. In a series of lectures delivered to volunteers who were sent to canvass demands from the people, Rusty Bernstein set out what was to be at the heart of the Charter. Thus in answer to the question 'what is people's democracy?', he wrote that 'for South Africa it is suggested:

1. Everyone must have an equal right to vote for and be elected to all official positions in the State.
2. The police force and army must be replaced by a genuine people's armed guard to uphold the rights of the people.
3. The biggest imperialist monopolies and industries and mines and factories must become the property of the people.
4. The farming lands must be shared on an equitable basis amongst all who work the land.
5. The equality of all races and sexes must be guaranteed by laws

and all discrimination must be declared a crime,

6. The right to form trade unions, to enjoy living wages and security in old age, sickness and unemployment must be guaranteed by law,

7. The right to all citizens to speak, move, assemble and organise freely must be guaranteed by law,

8. Housing must be provided for all the homeless by a redistribution of present housing and schools and hospitals be equally opened to all without discrimination. (42)

All these clauses mirrored closely the clauses eventually to be included in the Freedom Charter. Viewed in this light, the Congress of the People should be seen as an imaginative and effective mobilising event behind an already established political programme rather than as an echo of the voice of the people.

Professor Matthews' original proposal was that a common voters' roll of everyone over 21 be prepared and that a general election for delegates to the Congress then be held. In April 1954 Walter Sisulu announced a general election to 'elect people's representatives to a Congress of the People' (43), but the scheme was dropped, due to the impracticalities of organising such a venture and the danger that the state would read this as an attempt to establish an alternative organ of government. In its place, a loose form of representation was introduced, allowing any group of any size to send one or more delegates. The result was more like a rally than a delegates' conference. It allowed for a large attendance which would have been larger had the Security Police not intervened.

The Congress itself was a compelling occasion. It lasted two days, held in an open space near Kliptown, a coloured township near Johannesburg. It was attended by 2844 delegates. The various clauses of the Charter were introduced and there was an opportunity for impromptu speeches from various delegates before the clauses were read out and acclaimed by a show of hands. There were speeches but little debate; acclamation of clauses of the Charter but no rival resolutions. According to the published programme, each clause was introduced in eight minutes followed by two minutes of translation and thirty minutes of discussion. According to A S Chetty, a participant at the Congress, each item of the draft Charter was read to the crowd after which 'any delegate who had an amendment came up the podium to the mike' (44). The police record of the Congress, however, obviously to be read with caution, says that debate was not extensive. For example, the preamble to the Charter - containing what was to the Africanists a controversial clause saying that 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white' - was introduced by P. Beylveld, a leading member of the Communist Party, COD and SACTU. When he finished his speech, the chairperson asked: 'Are there any other speakers on the preamble? Ladies and gentlemen, if there are no other speakers and if we are satisfied that the preamble should be adopted I will formally ask you to accept the Preamble by raising up your hands. Thank you very much' (45). The proceedings were brought to a dramatic close by a large detachment of policemen bearing sten guns who arrived in the afternoon of the second day after most of the clauses of the Freedom Charter were adopted by the Congress.

In the aftermath of the Congress of the People, when the question of the ANC's adoption of the Freedom Charter was on the agenda, a call for full discussion and revision of the Charter prior to its acceptance by the ANC conference was made by Chief Lutuli, Professor Matthews and the Natal executive on the one side and the Africanist currents on the other. Concern was expressed about safeguarding the autonomy of the ANC against attempts to bulldoze the adoption of the Charter and the structure of the National Consultative Committee through the ANC, particularly as an abortive campaign to collect a million signatures for the Charter was initiated by the NAC in advance of the ANC's endorsement.

In the face of continuing divisions, no decision was made at the December 1955 national conference of the ANC. It was finally accepted at a special ANC conference designed to discuss tactics in the women's anti-pass campaign. Africanists charged that the meeting had been packed with non-delegates to allow the Charter to be railroaded through. Certainly there was no adequate discussion of the amendments put by Natal or of the reservations of the Africanist minority, but as Lutuli put it, 'ranks were closed against what was regarded as the obstructionism of the Leballo group' (46). Lodge has suggested that it is likely that lack of interest was more widespread than antipathy toward the Charter. This view was borne out by the complaint of the National Executive in its annual report of 1955:

In the Congress of the People campaign, although the ANC was responsible for the creation of the Congress of the People, many of its leaders and many of its branches showed a complete lack of

activity as if some of them regretted the birth of this great and noble idea,, (47)

There were misgivings about the Charter but most ANC members were reluctant to associate themselves with the advocacy of African exclusivism and hostility to 'foreign' allies and ideologies characteristic of the Africanist opposition. The 1955 Report of the Joint Executives of the ANC, COD, SACPD and SAIC noted that the campaign to collect signatures was not up to expectation and as a result the Freedom Charter was not popularised as desired' (48).

There can be little doubt that the popular base of the Freedom Charter has been idealised within the mythology of the liberation movement. The Charter was the imaginative creation and a mobilising device of a particular political movement at a particular moment in time. It has been presented, however, as the condensed expression of the will of the people. Herein lay the seeds of an idealised and potentially undemocratic view of the 'will of the people'.

There was disagreement over the form and content of the Charter at the time of its formation, some critics arguing that there was little of universal application in the Charter. For example, an extremely hostile view was taken by the Liberal Party, who were invited to join the NAC of the Congress of the People but after an internal dispute the Party withdrew from any participation. They feared that the structure of the Congress was such that in spite of promises to the contrary their voice would not be

heard and argued instead for a congress based on delegates from existing organisations. In the words of one leading member, Oscar Wollheim, the Party was 'frankly frightened' that it would be drawn into a campaign which it could not control and which would lead the Liberals into a form of radicalism they did not want (49). Peter Hjul, one of the Liberal members of the Cape Town local committee until his resignation at the beginning of 1955, contended that his function along with other committee members was merely to endorse pre-arranged decisions (50). 'A farce from beginning to end' was how he described it. Karis and Gerhart cite a anonymous Liberal's view of the Congress as 'a classical Communist frame-up' in which ANC leaders, confronted by a mass rally where discussion was impossible, had to choose between accepting certain demands or appearing reactionary' (51). The socialist implications of part of the Charter seemed to them to be a vindication of their apprehensions.

In Liberal eyes, the dominant influence in the campaign was the Congress of Democrats: 'men and women who set up bogus organisations as cover for the normal Communist aims... to rig control of the machinery of Congress, making it a pure Communist front organisation' (52). The left wing of the Liberal Party was equally cynical about the role played by COD, but saw participation in the Congress as an opportunity to strengthen Liberal influence among ANC members and take on 'a struggle with the Congress of Democrats which... would certainly be bitter and unprincipled on their side' (53). The force of anti-communism, constitutionalism and gradualism within the Liberal Party was, however, too strong for the left wing. The decision of the Liberal Party to take no part in the Congress of the People

summed up the equivocations of Liberalism and its failure to mount an effective challenge to the influence of the Communist Party. The Africanists held a similar view of the forces behind the Congress of the People.

The PAC channelled its critique of Congress into a critique of party politics in general, arguing that the ANC had been turned from a national movement into a political party by its adoption of the Freedom Charter. Several years later, in 1959, it wrote that

The ANC by cold-shouldering the 1949 Programme of Action... abandoned the road of an African Nationalist Movement in favour of the rigid straight-jacket of a Party machine. The adoption of the Freedom Charter... made the ANC a fully fledged political party, so that those like the Liberals who do not subscribe to the Freedom Charter cannot be members of the ANC. (54)

The Africanists touched on a vital issue but without exploring what lay behind it. The Freedom Charter appeared as what it was not, the condensation of the will of the people, and not as what it was, the programme or vision of a particular organisation or set of organisations. Anti-party feeling was central to the discourse of practically all sections of the liberation movement. The idea of a 'party' was associated with representation of merely a part of the people and especially of a class within the people. Thus Moses Kotane, writing as a member of the Communist Party as well as a leading figure in the ANC, expressed the same view of political organisation as the Africanists:

Congresses are not and should not be homogeneous bodies of people

who all belong to the same class and share the same outlook, but are essentially United Fronts of all sections of an oppressed nationality who seek liberty and democracy, (55)

The idea of a 'party' was identified with divisiveness, rigidity and sectionalism, while the idea of a 'congress' by contrast with unity, universality and fluidity. We find these sentiments going back to the 1940s when the Unity Movement accused the ANC of having become a political party rather than a national movement when it rejected federalism.

Important democratic practices were lost from sight with the rejection of party politics. A party claims to represent no more than a part of the people and its programme is open to rational criticism by other parties with other programmes. A party programme is determined according to the more or less democratic decision-making structures of the party and is capable of being revised or scrapped as the party develops. Individuals join or support a party as citizens, not by virtue of any ascribed 'national' status they hold in society but because of their individual beliefs, commitments and interests. A party seeks not only to bring together as an aggregate a multiplicity of separate interests around a body of shared demands but to fuse those interests into a cohesive whole. Notwithstanding the many constraints to which the bourgeois principle of party politics has been subjected - the incorporation of parties into the apparatus of the state, the suppression of intra-party democracy, the banning of opposition parties by the state, etc. - the principle itself has a democratic content which transcends its bourgeois origins.

In neighbouring Angola one of the leading members of the MPLA later put his finger on the developmental relation between a national movement and a party when he said:

Today we are just a mass movement, a popular movement, and not yet a real party with the structure of a party. Tomorrow there will be a party with its philosophy, its determined ideology and its structure. And to reach that level we must begin to prepare the way from today. That is why the MPLA is very interested in giving ideological education to our militants. (56)

Neto too emphasised the importance of a party rather than 'simply a movement' (57) for the democratic future of Angola. It is perhaps strange how leaders of the ANC, many of whom thought highly of the Westminster model of politics, lost sight of the democratic strengths of the party tradition which accompanied it, and how South African Communists, schooled in the party politics of Marx and Lenin, also eschewed all party organisation other than their own.

South Africa Belongs to All

Whether or not the Charter was inspired by the CPSA, its content was grounded firmly in the social context of apartheid. Its clauses were a response to the long list of apartheid legislation passed by the Nationalist government. By 1956 the list of statutes already passed by the government makes depressing reading: racial classification and exclusion through the Population Registration Act and Separate Representation of Voters Act; the tightening up of influx controls through the Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act; the extension of the pass laws through the Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act; the tightening of political control through the Suppression of Communism Act, the Public Safety Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act; the increase in segregation through the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and the Immorality Act; and the repression of black trade unionism through the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes Act).

The clauses of the Charter may be read as responses to one or more of these acts: South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people; all national groups shall have equal rights; the people shall share in the country's wealth; the land shall be shared among those who work it; all shall be equal before the law; all shall enjoy human rights; there shall be work and security, the right to form

labour unions, an end to contract labour and welfare legislation; the door of learning and culture shall be opened; there shall be houses, security and comfort. The debate about the origins of the Charter notwithstanding, Lutuli was not far off the mark when he said that 'the Charter... is line by line the direct outcome of conditions which obtain: harsh, oppressive and unjust conditions. It is thus a practical and relevant document. It attempted to give a flesh and blood meaning in the South African setting to such words as democracy, freedom and liberty. If the Charter is examined, it will be seen that freedom means the opening up of the opportunity to all South Africans to live full and abundant lives in terms of country, community and individual. It means the end of legalised bullying, the removal of sub-human outlook'. (58)

The great strength of the Freedom Charter was that it offered a powerful vision of a democratic alternative to apartheid; a government based on the will of the people as a whole, universal suffrage, equality before the law, civil liberties, freedom of movement, free trade unionism, redistribution of the land, state education and welfare, equal pay for equal work, the abolition of all apartheid legislation, transfer of the private monopolies in mining, industry and finance to the ownership of the people. The Freedom Charter offered a far more consistent and coherent vision of political democracy than had previously been proposed by the liberation movement in South Africa, but this should not blind us to the ambiguities and absences which ran through the text.

The Charter declared that 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white'. It was committed to the establishment of a 'democratic state based on the will of the people without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief' and the right of 'every man and woman to vote for and stand as candidates for all bodies which make laws' and to 'take part in the administration of the country'. What was not indicated in the text was whether it was to be a one-party or multi-party state. The idea that 'all national groups shall have equal rights' offered an important protection of minorities (through laws against discrimination and for the protection of languages, religions and cultures) but it did not articulate the building a fully non-racial South Africa in which all racial divisions and categories would be superseded.

The opening of the state administration, the police and the army 'to all on an equal basis' would have been a great step forward but the africanisation of the state machine in and of itself did not challenge the structures of coercion on which the old state was built. The opportunity for every citizen to join the state bureaucracy could create an identity between the state and the people, but only in the sense of 'an identity of two hostile armies in which every citizen has the opportunity to join the hostile army' (59). The problem was sharpest in regard to the police and the army. The Charter declared that they were to function as 'protectors and helpers' of the people, but it did not address what changes were to be introduced in their powers, organisation and accountability if the army and police were to belong to the people in more than name.

The idea that 'the mineral wealth, . . . the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole' was an ambiguous formulation which fell short of a commitment to nationalisation and said nothing about what form of nationalisation was envisaged. Under the apartheid state South Africa enjoyed many nationalised industries (e.g. in steel, rail, electricity and oil), but this has had precious little to do with the democratic management of industry. The freedom of 'all who work to form trade unions, to elect their officers and make wage agreements with their employers' made no mention of the right to strike or of the right of unions to political affiliation or activity. The principle that 'men and women shall receive equal pay for equal work' did not guarantee women access to equal work nor touch upon the many other forms of oppression facing women. The promise that 'the land should be shared among those who work it', that 'all the land' should be 're-divided amongst those who work it' and that 'the state shall help the peasants with implements, seeds, tractors and dams' did not explicitly indicate what forms of landownership this re-division would be based upon but intimated in its language of 'peasants' private ownership.

Notwithstanding these substantive gaps, the Freedom Charter represented a major democratic advance. The fundamental problem faced by many of the anti-charterists was that their objections were raised not because they found the Charter insufficiently democratic but because it was too democratic. Thus the Africanists repudiated the clause that South Africa should belong to all who live in it, black and white, seeing no reason

why the rights of the white minority should be respected. The Liberals repudiated the economic clauses calling for a transfer to the people of mineral wealth, banks and monopoly industry, because their belief in private property led them to oppose the democratisation of economic life. A number of independent socialists who opposed the 'two-stage' philosophy of the Communist Party rejected the Charter because they counterposed socialism to the fight for bourgeois democracy as if political emancipation were not the precondition for social emancipation. The 'two-stage' approach of the Communist Party itself gave rise to the possibility that the democratic goals of the Charter might be undone rather than extended in the passage to the second stage of socialism, given the influence which stalinism had at the time in the Communist Party's conception of socialism.

The political meaning of the Charter was not of course to be grasped by deciphering the text alone but by exploring how it was interpreted. Among the Charterists themselves there were to be differing views. An author in *New Age*, writing under the pseudonym of 'Inkululeko', argued that 'super-profits are incompatible with a sharing by the people in the wealth of the country. Migratory labour and the compound system cannot go hand in hand with the right of the workers to receive equal pay for equal work, his right to organise in trade unions and so on... (But) whatever our views might be as to the desirability of establishing a socialist system in South Africa the immediate aim of the liberatory movement is not and cannot be the establishment of socialism' (60). The following year Mandela characterised the Charter as 'a revolutionary

document precisely because the changes it envisages cannot be won without breaking up the economic and political set-up of the present South Africa' and saw its economic clauses as demanding 'the nationalisation of the banks, the goldmines and the land' (61).

Within a few years, however, in 1959 the Congress of Democrats construed the two economic clauses said to have had this revolutionary content - 'The people shall share in the country's wealth' and 'The land shall be shared among those who work it' - in such a way as to rule out any reference to social ownership. In their eyes it was 'obvious' that 'the former refers to the elimination of racial rather than class restrictions... The term "people" cannot surely apply only to workers. The second clause surely does not call for the socialisation of land' (62).

These various interpretations reveal the ambiguities present in the document, but to understand them we need to explore the strategic place which the Freedom Charter occupied in the struggles which followed its adoption. One of the difficulties in assessing the Charter lay in its abstraction as a desirable end from the means required for its realisation, since the Charter self-consciously offered no programme of action. The democracy of the future was suspended in mid-air, divorced from the here-and-now of the earthly struggle. This relation between means and ends arose sharply in the debates around the Women's Charter,

The democratic programme embodied in the Women's Charter and passed at the founding congress of the Women's Federation a year before the passage of the Freedom Charter, stressed full equality between the sexes: universal suffrage, equal pay, equal possibility of promotion in work, equal rights in property, marriage and children, free compulsory education for all. It made specific social demands 'for the protection of mother and child': maternity homes, welfare clinics, creches, nursery schools, as well as the provision of homes, water, light, sanitation. As Cheryl Walker has observed, the Women's Federation was 'the first national women's organisation to include a comprehensive programme for the emancipation of women along with its general political programme... It represented a real and serious attempt to incorporate women into the political programme of the national liberation movement on an equal footing with men' (63).

The list of demands the Federation wished to submit for inclusion within the Freedom Charter were written up in a document called 'What Women Demand'. In a draft version, the demand was made for the provision of basic social amenities in the Reserves, 'more and better land... schools for children... maternity, medical and social services... shops and controlled prices ...planned agricultural development' as well as the abolition of the migratory labour system itself. It drew strong criticism from a group of Congress leaders who argued that implicit in this demand was an acceptance of the legitimacy of separate reserves. The Federation accepted this criticism and withdrew the proposal. Commenting on this Cheryl Walker's assessment of the Federation as

'unnecessarily humble' is instructive. She writes:

Merely ignoring those areas (reserves) because they formed part of an unacceptable policy did not solve the problems of basic survival confronting the people living there. Nor did it assist those people develop their own strategies for resisting the very policies which kept them in an impoverished and dependent position. (64)

The premise behind the Federation's original set of demands was that the fight to abolish the 'bantustans' should not be counterposed to the struggles of those forced to live within them for immediate reform. By focussing on the fraudulence of the bantustans, the Congress failed to see their significance as far as political action was concerned. Although it was vital to condemn the 'homelands' strategy, it was not to be forgotten that for many women the 'homelands' were both home and their place of mainly unwaged work. (65)

The Federation's perspective related not only to the position of women in the reserves but to the general political framework adopted by Congress. 'What Women Demand' posed immediate social demands, which could serve as the foci of particular reform movements, in addition to the more abstract vision of a future society put forward in the Freedom Charter. Its demands for the abolition of convict labour, minimum wages, paid holidays, the inclusion of farmworkers in industrial legislation, national medical services, cost of living allowances, birth control clinics, food subsidies, controlled prices, fair rationing, street lighting, parks, indoor sanitation, day nurseries, the abolition of

passes, etc. provided a concrete programme around which women could be mobilised and a link between the future aspirations expressed in the Freedom Charter and the current conditions of the people. The women proposed what the Freedom Charter lacked, namely a bridge between the present and the future, between reform and liberation, between demands on the existing state and the transformation of the state itself. We may speculate that one of the factors behind the 'humility' of the Women's Federation lay the party discipline imposed on its Communist leadership.

The National Executive of the ANC declared after the Congress of the People that 'it is not enough to have adopted the Freedom Charter. It must not become a document framed and hanging on the wall. The Charter can and must be the inspiration of the people in their freedom fight; it must be their organiser... It must be related to struggle, it must be illustrated by life itself'(66). How this vision of the future was in fact related to the struggles of the latter half of the 1950s is a question to which we shall soon return.

Ch. 9

The revival of the working class movement

A class for itself?

In the latter half of the 1950s the working class movement began in earnest the difficult process of recovery. The struggle took off on a number of related but distinct sites: women against the extension of passes, community movements against increases in costs of social consumption, 'reservists' in the countryside against the imposition of 'Bantu authorities' and the state's so-called 'betterment' schemes, workers in the factories over wages, conditions and trade union recognition. At a national level, many workers participated in the stay-aways and campaigns called by the Congress Alliance and more often than not went far beyond the template imposed by the politicians.

As a class with its own independent interests, goals, methods of struggle and ways of thinking, the working class remains curiously invisible in the historiography of the period, appearing typically as the 'mass' within the 'nation' rather than as a collective actor in its own right. This reflected the surface reality of the time, since in political terms working class identity was obscured under the mantle of

conflicting nationalisms. Beneath the surface, however, workers did re-assert in practice their own class interests and needs within and without the national liberation movement. Class struggles did not manifest themselves directly in the political conflicts of the 1950s, expressed as they were in the language of race and nation, but they nonetheless remained their crucial determinants.

The invisibility of the working class was a function first and foremost of its own inherent weaknesses inherited from the 1940s. In general the obstacles to the growth of working class consciousness in the 1950s arose on the one hand from the internal fragmentation of the working class, particularly but not exclusively on racial lines, and on the other from the lack of distinction of the working class as a party in its own right from other class forces. The roots of working class vulnerability lay in the economy, deriving from the structural position of workers in production. In particular, the black industrial labour force, as the most advanced sector of the working class as a whole, was still relatively small, dispersed and deskilled. Although the growth of the industrial proletariat had continued into the 1950s, the bargaining power of black workers was no stronger than it had been in the 1940s.

Between 1950 and 1960 the contribution of manufacture to the Gross Domestic Product went up slowly from 17.1% to 21% and averaged around 20% for the period as a whole. There were a few large industries with substantial concentrations of workers particularly in iron, steel and

engineering but most industrial workers were employed in small concerns. In 1953-4 65% of all industrial establishments employed fewer than nine workers and in 1959 the average number of workers per factory was in the vicinity of 43. Most of the small manufactories were labour-intensive and very low-waged and partly as a consequence of state labour policies, the expansion of labour-intensive light industries (in food, paper, textiles, laundries etc.) was faster than that of the more mechanised capital goods sector. When growth slowed down in the later 1950s the trend to labour-intensity became even more marked(1).

The growth of industry in the 1950s was slowed down by the skewing of the economy in favour of the development of mining; especially with the discovery of gold-bearing deposits in the Orange Free State and the substantial payments paid by the American and British governments to encourage the diversion of economic resources into the mining of uranium(2). The major economic obstacle to mechanisation and the growth of the capital-goods sector lay in the recurrent balance of payments crises which struck in 1948-9, 1953-4 and particularly 1960-61 when gold and foreign exchange reserves plummeted by over 50% and 'South Africa faced a balance of payments crisis more severe than any experienced since 1932' (3). This was exacerbated by loss of confidence in the political stability of South Africa by overseas capitalists but the underlying cause lay in the low productivity of industrial labour in South Africa by international standards and South Africa's dependence on the import of machinery and equipment from the more advanced capitalist countries.

The problems present in South Africa's industrial sector became worse as the decade progressed. From a growth rate of 7.2% in 1954, industrial output grew by 4.4% in 1955, 3.4% in 1956, 2.3% in 1957 and 1.7% in 1958. In 1959 a minus growth rate of -1.4% was recorded. Thus despite the substantial growth of national income in the 1950s (from £585.6m in 1949 to £995m in 1960 at constant prices) and the small growth in the share of manufacturing industry, the industrial sector was caught in a cycle of stagnation and backwardness. The number of workers employed in manufacturing industry remained small in relation to the working population as a whole. In 1959 there were under 750,000 people employed in factories out of a total population of almost 16 million and an economically active population of over 5.5 million.

Further, although the proportion of black to white workers in manufacturing grew, in 1960 under 400,000 were african (out of a total african population of almost 11 million), just under 200,000 were white (out of a white population of around three million), over 100,000 were coloured (out of a population of 1.5 million) and around 33,000 were indian (out of a population of half a million). Africans constituted accordingly a little over half the entire factory workforce and whites well over one quarter. In the commercial sector there were as many white workers as african, coloured and asian put together (about 255,000 each) and in transport more white workers than black (about 116,000 to 89,000).

(4). The increased dependency of white workers on the Nationalist Party and the state gave its diminishing but still powerful presence in industrial and commercial work an added significance.

The vast majority of african workers in factories were still male. Black women were beginning to enter factory production, for example in food and canning, but only a small minority of urban black women were industrial or commercial workers. Most were still either in domestic labour or working in the hidden economy as washerwomen, beer brewers, shabbeen owners, prostitutes and the like, with their income being more important than ever for the subsistence needs of an urban african family. Well over six million africans still lived in the rural areas with farm labour on white farms accounting for about one-third of the economically active african population. Some 1.5 million africans were registered as labouring on white farms but when dependants of african farmworkers are considered almost 3.5 million lived on white farms in 1960. Coloured and asian farm workers accounted for another 14% of the workforce or about 240,000 workers. The lives of grinding poverty and servility lived by these workers seem if anything to have become worse in the 1950s so that by the end of the decade the average earning of african farm labourers was some £3 a month. Equally on the reserves all reports pointed to the continued erosion of subsistence production and growing rural unemployment with 95% of the unemployed ineligible for the dole.

On the mines some 430,000 african workers were recruited (1959 figures) and constituted an ever-increasing proportion of the mine workforce as a whole. Of these, however, only about 180,000 were South African in origin. Their dependency on the employers for housing and food, their subordination to Masters and Servants legislation and their legally

enforced immobility for the duration of their contracts were unabated. The turnover of african labour on the mines was high, not least because some 200 africans a week were estimated to have been sent home to die from diseases contracted in the mines. The great majority of africans employed in two of the main urban centres of production, the metal industry and the docks, were also contracted migrants housed in compounds.

There were countervailing factors more conducive to working class organisation. Notwithstanding state policy to the contrary, the concentration of black workers in the urban areas continued unabated. From 1946 to 1960 the african population in urban areas increased from just under two million (or 24% of the african population) to almost 3.5 million (or 32%). The conditions of migrant labour which affected such a large proportion of the african labour force - even in the mid-1960s second generation townspeople comprised only 15% of Soweto residents and 14% of East London residents (5) - often made the conflict at the place of work that much the sharper and relayed the experience of conflict at the place of work back into the countryside. Further, the migrant labour system was identified by important sections of capital with low levels of productivity by international standards. The higher skills of black workers, though not formally recognised by management, were nonetheless real in their consequences for bargaining power. Overall, however, the economic power of the black working class in the 1950s was not substantially changed from what it had been in the 1940s but the political conditions in which it functioned did change significantly for

the worse. It was only in the 1960s that the growth of manufacturing industry gave birth to an industrial working class with an economic power more akin to those in advanced capitalist societies and more capable of combatting a political super-structure which denied it recognition.

State policy in the 1950s functioned partly through direct repression. Trade unionists were banned under the Suppression of Communism Act, Strikes by african workers were prohibited under the 1953 Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act and by its tougher amendment in 1959 which imposed a maximum fine of £500 or three years imprisonment for joining or supporting an illegal strike. The Native Labour Act also established an official system of management-dominated conciliation called Works Committees and a state bureaucracy of Bantu Labour Officers in place of trade unions for africans. In 1958 a directive was sent to all employers of 'native' labour, saying that any African discharged as a result of participation in strikes, demonstrations or absenteeism was not to be re-hired without official approval. In 1959 the Food and Canning industry was declared 'essential' and all workers in the industry banned from striking. Restrictions were imposed on the deduction of stop-orders for african workers and many legal restrictions were imposed on trade union meetings under general laws of assembly. In 1956 23 SACTU trade unionists were charged with High Treason in 1956 and some convicted of incitement in 1958

Accompanying direct repression was the state's encouragement of ethnic fragmentation within the working class; partly through general apartheid legislation like Group Areas, Population Registration and Bantu Education Acts, and partly through labour laws which created a separate industrial relations machinery for africans. The 1956 Amendment to the Industrial Conciliation Act provided that no further 'mixed' unions would be allowed to register and sought to impose racially separate branches and all-white executive committees on existing 'mixed' unions which refused to split. It prohibited all workers, black and white, from striking in 'essential industries', banned unions from political affiliations and Clause 77 gave legal backing to the reservation of skilled jobs to white workers, as the Native Building Workers Act of 1951 had already done for white workers in the building trade, 'to insure that they will not be exploited by the lower standard of living of any other race' (6).

The Minister of Labour, Ben Schoeman, expressed the hostility of the government to independent trade unions, describing black workers as 'primitive or illiterate natives who have not the faintest conception of the responsibilities of trade unionism' and expressing the fear that 'if we give them the incentive to organise ... they can use their trade unions as a political weapon and they can create chaos in South Africa... We should probably be committing race suicide if we gave them that incentive'. He forecast that under his tutelage african trade unionism 'would probably die a natural death' (7).

Apartheid in general tended to militate against the delineation of a working class identity distinct from the 'people' as a whole. In response to the dangers posed by the concentration of black workers and work-seekers in and around the urban areas, state policy was to try to develop a system of social control which permanently located the urban proletariat in the rural areas in terms of family, cultural and political ties, while continuing to reproduce its economic dependence on urban wage labour. This involved not only the extension of administrative controls over black industrial workers but also a process of social engineering which in its apartheid form affected all black people as non-citizens of South Africa. For such reasons there was a built-in tendency for black workers' resistance to capital and to the labour controls imposed by the state to be swept up in the tide of a more general popular resistance to apartheid among many sections of the black population.

Further obstacles to the development of a specifically working class movement came from within the national liberation movement itself, whose leaders enjoined workers not to conceive of themselves as a class with its own distinct interests cutting across racial lines, but rather to develop a 'national' consciousness of themselves as africans, indians, coloureds or whites (or alternatively as non-europeans in opposition to the herrenvolk) along with the middle class of their own national group. Although the liberation movement encouraged workers to unite as workers in non-racial unions through the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), this was limited to the trade union sphere and not extended

into the political. Workers belonging to different national groups were brought together politically through the medium of the Congress Alliance but only after they were first separated off into their national blocs. Their political identity was depicted in national not class terms and both the main inheritors of the socialist political banner, communists and trotskysts, themselves generally endorsed a nationalist perspective.

With all these obstacles placed in the path of the working class in the 1950s, the advances which they nonetheless made are all the more remarkable. What was possible for the working class in the 1950s was perhaps relatively modest: the establishment of their own organisations and ideas and the battle for limited economic and political reforms, to serve as the foundation for pursuing the struggle more effectively when workers acquired for themselves greater social and economic power vis-a-vis capital. With the benefit of hindsight we know that within a relatively short space of time the economic base of working class struggle was to be strengthened by the rapid economic upturn which took off in the early 1960s and in particular by the growth of manufacturing industry. By the time this boom arrived, however, the black labour movement was in no position to take advantage of it.

Trade union organisation

The revival of independent trade unionism, after almost ten years of decline and dispersal, was marked by the formation in 1955 of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). Born out of the remains of CNETU and the TLC, SACTU represented the trade union wing of Congress and was its only fully non-racial component. At its birth, it had some 20,000 members in 19 affiliated unions and was to grow to 30,000 by 1956 and to over 55,000 workers by 1961. Its main strength lay in three registered unions and their black counterparts: Food and Canning, Textiles and Laundry. Among the laundry workers were about 400 whites who were the only white workers represented by SACTU and played an important role alongside SACTU's white officials in symbolising the non-racial character of the movement. With SACTU's formation a number of new unions were formed and old unions revived in light industry, food processing, stevedoring, rail, services and even metal. Although its numbers were relatively small and its organisation relatively weak, the birth of SACTU as a non-racial trade union movement independent of the state represented a major step forward.

In the four years from 1955 to 1958 there was a significant rise in the number of industrial strikes. According to Department of Labour official statistics, the picture for the 1950s as a whole was as follows:(8)

Year	Total Strikes	White Strikes		Black Strikes		Prosecutions	
		No.	Participants	No.	Participants	No.	% of Black
1950	33	8	878	25	2399	10	40%
1951	36	5	790	31	7204	4	13%
1952	54	6	496	48	5963	12	25%
1953	30	7	819	23	1479	15	75%
1954	60	21	1096	39	4618	22	57%
1955	102	20	984	82	9479	22	25%
1956	105	13	409	92	6428	21	22%
1957	119	6	664	113	6158	20	17%
1958	74	10	650	64	7128	23	36%
1959	46	3	99	43	3462	27	63%
1960	42	9	234	33	5266	Unknown	
1961	81	5	---	75	4662	Unknown	

Industrial militancy rose markedly in the years 1955-58 and there is some indication that the use of repressive legislation against striking workers declined in this period. Without presupposing a cause-and-effect relationship between industrial action and wage rates, there are *prima facie* grounds for believing that the increase in strike activity among black workers did have some bearing by 1958/9 in halting the erosion of black workers' wages, as the following figures of wages in private manufacturing and construction indicate(9):

Year	Av Earnings p. a.		Increase over prior year	
	1959-60 prices			
	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks
1950	1499	317	0,9	-0,6
1951	1559	316	4,0	-0,3
1952	1588	313	1,9	-0,9
1953	1634	320	2,9	2,2
1954	1709	323	4,6	0,9
1955	1774	328	2,8	0,3
1956	1817	331	2,4	0,9
1957	1817	326	0,0	-1,5
1958	1836	333	1,0	2,1
1959	1872	348	2,0	4,5
1960	1907	365	1,9	4,9

(n.b. in 1955, there were changes in the method of compiling statistics.)

It would appear that in the wake of the 1955-58 strike wave black workers in private industry made significant advances on the wages front for the first time since the war and won a faster rate of wage increase than white workers.

It became almost an orthodoxy in Congress circles, reflected in later commentaries, that industrial struggles could not be won independently of political change at the national level. The main reason given for this was that the unfavourable political and economic terrain on which trade union disputes were waged usually pre-ordained their defeat. Ben

Turok, for example, at the time a leading member of the Communist Party and SACTU, argued that 'wage demands were very often unrealizable in straight trade union terms. If advanced workers made demands, they would be charged. The only way to take up wage issues was in the context of a national campaign... to create a climate which would force the government and employers to give concessions (10). It would be misleading, however, to conclude from the repressive political and legal climate of the 1950s that effective industrial action was impossible. Unsurprisingly in what was still a young movement many individual strikes ended in defeat: notably the violent repression of the textile workers' strike at Amato in 1958 ended in the destruction of what had been a particularly well organised union branch (11). There were, however, other instances in which wage increases, improved conditions and recognition were won through industrial action or the threat of industrial action. The results were uneven, but as SACTU official, Brian Bunting, a little over-optimistically put it: 'where workers' unity is complete, reprisals become impossible' (12). Bunting cited two examples of successful strike action, milling workers in Johannesburg in 1957 and clothing workers in Hammarsdale in 1959.

In the case of the milling workers, in November 1957 over 1500 african workers walked out of six Johannesburg flour mills in protest against low wages, demanding the publication of a Wage Board investigation. The strike led to a 12.5% wage increase, no prosecutions and no victimisation. SACTU's official biographers, Luckhardt and Wall, commented that 'the bosses sensed the potential danger of the sympathy

strikes that were occurring in related industries' (13). *New Age* considered this 'the most successful African strike for a long time' (14). In February 1959 at the Hammarsdale Clothing Factory, set up 27 miles from Durban as a 'border industry' designed to take advantage of the pool of cheap labour available in the reserves, 388 african workers walked out in support of a demand for higher wages. They won an agreement granting full recognition of the African Clothing Workers Union (a SACTU affiliate), negotiations within the year for better wages and conditions and permission to hold trade union meetings inside the factory. After the management reneged on the agreement, making a 'sweetheart' deal instead with the registered Garment Workers Union, the whole black workforce of 500 workers walked out again. The strike continued despite the arrest of 137 workers, including members of the union committee, under the Native Labour Act. Management threatened to close down the factory but finally re-opened it, granting recognition to the ACWU and increased wages, but without re-instating the chair of the union (15).

The story of the Food and Canning Workers Union (FCWU) and its african sister-union (AFCWU) is instructive in this context (16). They were able to develop in the first half of the 1950s thanks to a rapidly expanding food and canning industry, a relatively united workforce and the bargaining power which came from the need to process fruit and vegetables very quickly in the busy season. The union gained substantial wage increases largely through conciliation board agreements. It only once went on official strike, at Spekenham's from August to October

1957, on which occasion it was defeated. Workers, however, often struck illegally and unofficially and sometimes with considerable success; as was the case in January 1954 at Wolsely Fruit Canning Company, where the initial criminal convictions of strikers were overturned in the appeals court and workers won better conditions. In some cases workers striking in the busy season won their demands only for them to be rescinded in the slack season. With a number of employers the union obtained stop orders, the right of union organisers to enter factories, re-employment based on seniority and the re-instatement of workers under unfair dismissal. The union organised study classes for workers, including political education along lines supported by the Congress Alliance. In some areas effective factory committees were established and in some 'the union was the focal point of the whole social life' (17), putting forward political demands for the community in general. In Port Elizabeth and Paarl, where the union had a large number of african women members, it played an important role in the women's anti-pass campaigning and succeeded in postponing the introduction of passes. (18)

Though the banning of union officials dated back to that of Ray Alexander in 1953, there appears to have been a marked increase in the state and management offensive from 1958. Serious divisions arose in the union (for reasons about which we are unclear but included embezzlement of union funds by some officials) as unemployment rose and influx controls were tightened up. Leading union members were victimised, not least because according to one member 'the bosses' chosen leaders have been made supervisors to have the right to dismiss whoever they like'

(19); some stop order facilities were withdrawn; some wage cuts recommended by the Wage Board were implemented and in 1959 the canning industry was declared an 'essential service' thereby removing the right to strike. Even so, in at least two companies the union successfully resisted wage cuts in 1959.

The President of CNETU commented in 1954 that 'the Native Labour Act cannot kill unions which are based in factories rather than offices' (20). This seems to have been true of unions like Food and Canning, which circumvented the legal ban on 'mixed' unions through separate but genuinely equal branches or unions. By 1960 56 'mixed' unions still remained registered under the Industrial Conciliation Act. The official conciliation machinery was widely rejected, with only ten works committees successfully established. The reservation of 'skilled' jobs for white workers could not annul the fact that there were many skilled and semi-skilled black and coloured workers whose skills, though not recognised in law, were in fact required for the running of industry and formed the basis of their negotiating strength. The attempt to draw the teeth of militant unions through the terms of registration under the Industrial Conciliation Act met with only partial success, SACTU's strongest affiliates in food and canning, textiles and laundry all being registered unions. The ban on strikes by african workers did not prevent their occurrence. In some cases where workers refused to pay their fines, management was compelled to pay them in their stead for fear of losing their workforce through imprisonment. In other cases, unions won

legal battles against the conviction of their members. In others still, fines were paid and prison sentences endured.

Notwithstanding these qualifications the context for industrial organisation and action was certainly difficult and after 1958 it became worse as unemployment rose and repression accelerated. Thus the proportion of strikes which resulted in criminal prosecutions of workers went up sharply, reaching 63% in 1959. A leading SACTU organiser, Leon Levy, depicted vividly the state response which many black strikers encountered:

When a strike occurs, it resembles a small-scale civil war. Lorry loads of police armed with batons, sten guns and tear-gas bombs are rushed to the factory; great 'pick up' vans arrive and all the strikers are arrested. (21)

In addition to state repression, however, there were internal weaknesses in the trade union movement which precipitated its loss of momentum after 1958. First and foremost was the problem of fragmentation within the organised labour movement. Most evident on the surface were the racial divisions which split the movement apart, but the problem of racism was linked to other divisions: between the skilled and the unskilled, between unions granted legal recognition through registration under the Industrial Conciliation Act and those denied the right to register, and not least along cold-war lines between those unions which supported the 'west' and the ICFTU, and those oriented to the 'east' and the soviet international trade union bloc of WFTU. While the racial divide in the South African labour movement was unique in its intensity,

the split between the western unions and the communist was not peculiar to South Africa. In most European countries, with the exception of Britain, trade union movements were split asunder as the cold war between the 'west' and 'east' grew in virulence. In South Africa the congealing of these divisions around the axis of race proved damaging to the movement as a whole.

SACTU was not the only trade union federation to emerge in the mid-1950s. It was a small body, relative both to the organised labour movement as a whole and to the mass of unorganised black workers. The majority of white unions were affiliated to the racially exclusive and right-wing Federal Consultative Council, Co-ordinating Council and Federation of Trade Unions. In 1958 they combined into the South African Confederation of Labour, with a membership of around 150,000 white workers and a few coloureds and indians. About the same size was the South African Trades Union Council, SATUC, formed in 1954 and renamed TUCSA in 1962. It had 40 affiliated unions with 147,000 members. It accepted affiliation only from registered unions in this period, thus excluding african workers but including coloureds and indians. It was committed to the 'western' side of the cold war divide and had close ties with the ICFTU and national trade union centres like the British TUC, (22)

In addition, there were independent unions unaffiliated to any co-ordinating body which were said to represent around 85,000 workers.

Notable among them was the National Union of Distributive Workers, which acted as a bridge between SATUC and SACTU. SACTU, accordingly, constituted only a small part of the organised trade union movement as a whole, a larger but still small minority among organised coloured and indian workers most of whom were in SATUC unions, and a higher proportion of organised african workers although there were a substantial number who were in independent unions or after 1958 joined african unions affiliated to FOFATUSA (the Federation of Free African Trade Unions), linked to SATUC and the PAC. The vast majority of african workers were not organised. In manufacturing there were in all around 300,000 african workers, in mining almost half a million, in transport 150,000, in services around 800,000, in commerce over 150,000 and in agriculture at least one million. The problems involved in organising the unorganised were vast enough in themselves. In the context of a deeply divided trade union movement, where the best organised workers were often in trade union bodies least interested in organising the unorganised, they were all the more daunting.

Political unionism

From its inception, SACTU affirmed a political role for itself as the trade union wing of the national liberation movement. In his address to the inaugural conference of SACTU in 1955, the Chairman stressed that 'you cannot separate politics and the way people are governed from their bread and butter, or their freedom to move to and from places where they can find the best employment, or the houses they live in, or the type of education their children get. These things are of vital concern to workers. The Trade Unions would therefore be neglecting the interests of their members if they failed to struggle for their members on all matters which affect them. The Trade Unions must be as active in the political field as they are in the economic sphere because the two hang together and cannot be isolated from each other'. (23) The same principle was embodied in the Statement of Policy passed at the first Annual Conference in 1956:

SACTU is conscious of the fact that the organising of the mass of the workers for higher wages, better conditions of life and labour, is inextricably bound up with a determined struggle for political rights and liberation from all oppressive laws and practices. It follows that a mere struggle for the economic rights of all the workers without participation in the general struggle for political emancipation would condemn the Trade Union movement to uselessness and to a betrayal of the interests of workers. (24)

Lutuli expressed the same point more eloquently when he said that he was

glad that SACTU had 'not listened to the ill advice that they should not be interested in politics. There is a Zulu saying that if you are pricked by a thorn you also have to use a thorn to get it out. Workers are oppressed by political action; they must take political action in reply'(25). SACTU's first campaigning role in 1955 was in support of the Congress of the People; later that year it formally became a member of the Congress Alliance with representation on the National Co-ordinating Committee; Communist Party members played a key role in its organisation. SACTU was from the start in every sense a 'political union'.

Economic and political struggles were inseparable. 'Apolitical' trade unionism was but another name for a form of trade unionism which embraced or compromised with the existing state. Thus SATUC's claim to be 'apolitical' comprised in substance a commitment to cold-war anti-communism, support of 'western' trade union movements, exclusion of african workers and conformity with apartheid law. The term 'political trade unionism' (26), however, says nothing about the substance of the politics adopted by SACTU. SACTU was not merely 'political' but embraced a definite kind of political orientation, one that was influenced by the Communist Party and oriented to Congress. In this arrangement, working class organisation was limited to the trade union sphere, while the political struggle was conducted in national rather than class terms. SACTU's official conception of 'political unionism' accepted this division of labour from the start. SACTU itself was a hybrid creature. On the one hand, it functioned as a transmission belt conveying

nationalist politics to the working class with the Communist Party as the key intermediary. On the other, it functioned as an organised expression of working class consciousness. Commentators have tended to emphasise one or other side of the dual character of SACTU without comprehending its contradictory nature. A battle was fought out between those who sought to use SACTU as a springboard for building a working class orientation in Congress and those who sought to construct a mass base for nationalist politics through the medium of SACTU. The balance of these forces shifted significantly over time.

In the first three years of its existence SACTU nationally was very weak and depended heavily for its finance and organisation on its well-established registered unions, Textiles, Food and Canning, Laundry and their African counterparts. There was a limit, therefore, to the influence which SACTU as a trade union congress could bring to bear on its affiliates. Combined with the rise from below of industrial combativity, this meant that the political agenda of SACTU nationally could not easily displace the bread-and-butter economics of the trade unions. An example of this can be seen in the battle over 'registration' within SACTU. When the government introduced its bill to amend the Industrial Conciliation Act, SACTU was united in its opposition to its racially divisive edicts (as too was SATUC) and called for equal recognition of all workers under the Industrial Conciliation Act. The question at issue, however, was how to respond. Especially among Communist Party officials in SACTU, there was a call for the registered affiliates of SACTU to deregister rather than accept the new terms of

registration. Their argument was couched in the terms of african nationalism; if african workers could not belong to registered unions, then it would be divisive if other workers did belong. In Gaetswewe's words, 'registration has got strings . . . the set up in South Africa means that registered workers continue to benefit from the suffering of African workers' (27).

The proponents of de-registration argued that 'those that have some benefits from registration should throw that away and come back to those who are not registered' (28). They downplayed the advantages of registration: 'a trade union exists because it has members, not because it is registered. . . Let us have confidence in our workers and let us not underestimate our strength' (29). As Eli Weinberg put it, 'the African workers are on the move again, and they no doubt will again prove to the members of registered unions that the most effective way to secure benefits is workers unity and not some kind of nebulous "recognition"' (30). The proponents of de-registration argued that registration was the kiss of death for independent trade unionism since 'workers would no longer have the right to run their own organisations in their own manner' (31). Mpetha made deregistration a point of principle, arguing that 'working within the Act was to agree to baaskap' (32).

SACTU's registered unions, on the other hand, were reluctant to forego the advantages which registration offered them and preferred to make use of the limited legal recognition available, while evading as far as

possible the restrictions which accompanied it. Whereas the amended ICA demanded an all-white executive in 'mixed' unions, the registered unions in SACTU chose either to fight for exemption from this requirement, which they sometimes won, or formally to split their unions into racially separate bodies while working closely together on an informal level. They opposed voluntary de-registration since it would lose them the vital trade union rights which registration offered. The trade union organisation of African workers was extremely weak and this needed to be recognised. As one opponent of de-registration put it, 'the conference should face facts and consider how many organised workers there were in South Africa, when they called for negotiation from strength' (33). Registration was useful for access to workers, for winning recognition from management, for making legally binding agreements; it was not to be thrown away lightly. As Don Mateman of the Textile Workers succinctly put it, 'what we have we must keep. What we do not have we must fight for' (34). Or at greater length:

Workers must build themselves up on what they have achieved. They must maintain what they had won and like soldiers they need to dig trenches. What you have suffered and fought for, you must maintain. If you conquer one space, you can move into other factories. Workers can only be strong in an organised fashion and they must preserve what they've got otherwise it becomes a very cheap struggle. (35)

There was apprehension among the opponents of deregistration that SACTU could lose its white, coloured and indian workers to registered unions outside SACTU (most of whom were already in SATUC) without any advantage to african workers, were they to forego the rights of registration. It

was for good reason that the most successful african unions in SACTU were those closely associated with registered unions and that formal separation of african workers from non-africans did not stop their real unity. As Liz Abrahams, an organiser for Food and Canning, commented on her union; 'we just split the name, but everything remained the same. In those early days we did not even take notice of the race issue - our aim was to build up the workers, unite the workers and unite the unions. (36)

The de-registration position, supported by members of the Communist Party, predominated in SACTU nationally, but there was no clear resolution of the issue. It was resolved in practice by the registered unions in SACTU when none of them agreed to de-register and they and their non-registered african counterparts continued to be the best organised and most effective of the SACTU unions. SACTU's official historians have interpreted 'the unwillingness of registered unions to follow the lead proposed by their African brothers and sisters' as 'reflective of the... limitations on trade unions as revolutionary organisations' and as evidence that 'trade unions are... essentially defensive capitalist institutions organised to protect workers and are thus inherently reformist' (37). This conclusion was entirely ill-founded. What was at issue was not 'reformism' but using the legal space made available by registration to build trade union organisation.

The issues behind registration were further muddled by the hostile relations between SACTU and SATUC. Both opposed the amended ICA and SACTU approached SATUC, in spite of their differences, to form a united front in opposition to the Act. In an editorial in *Workers Unity Ray* Alexander argued that white unions in SATUC objected to the IC Bill only because they feared that black workers threatened to reduce their standard of living unless they were organised and that SACTU could not therefore base its policy on the assumption that 'in the present set up of trade unions there is a possibility of real working class unity' (38). Nonetheless, Alexander concluded that SACTU should still look for unity with SATUC mindful that a large majority of organised indian and coloured workers were in SATUC and not SACTU. For its part SATUC sabotaged the opportunity for a united front in opposition to the government's trade union laws. It told SACTU that it 'would determine its own policy and prepare its own campaign' (39) and declared that it would co-operate with the government in 'preventing the ever-increasing Native labour force from continuing to menace the European standard of living'. It promised that it would not break the law or organise strikes against the Bill. Within SACTU the demand of the de-registration lobby that all progressive unions should de-register could only affect adversely any chance of a united front with SATUC and of reaching the workers whom SATUC organised.

The election strike

Early in 1957 SACTU was swept by the growing tide of popular militancy, in particular the Alexandra bus boycott, into launching a £1 a day minimum wage campaign. Before SACTU could develop the campaign on its own terms, the National Co-ordinating Committee of the Congress Alliance called for a countrywide 'Day of Protest, Prayer and Demonstration' for Freedom Day, the 26 June, 1957, in which workers in Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth were enjoined to stay at home and workers elsewhere to hold prayer meetings and processions in their free time. The main issues were £1 a day minimum wage and opposition to passes, but these were combined with a wide range of other demands: no tax increase, no Bantu education, no Group Areas, no bannings, stop police raids, freedom of worship, open universities, no apartheid in nursing, Verwoed must go, down with apartheid, forward to a multi-racial conference. The idea was to use the stay-at-home to hold religious services, offer prayers against apartheid, hold sporting and cultural meetings and organise discussions around the Freedom Charter. In spite of extensive state and management efforts to undercut the call, it met with considerable response among workers with claims that it was 70-80% successful in Johannesburg and around 50% in Port Elizabeth. Alongside the relatively high level of industrial strikes that year, the bus boycotts, the anti-pass agitation and the rural unrest, the stay-at-home seems to have concentrated the mind of government sufficiently to incite a flurry of wage board activity and wage determinations increasing the pay of the 'unskilled'. (40) As a demonstrative event, the stay-away was a success

in its own terms and showed the potential of conjoining political and economic struggles. Workers could only participate in strike action, however, in the face of great danger to themselves; to undertake such effort and risk required that they had some conception of the utility of the action and some involvement in the decision to take action. Failure by the Congress leadership to address these issues led to what one commentator has called the belief that 'the people were only too ready to stay at home, whenever they were called upon to do so' (41).

The 1957 Conference of the ANC did not discuss the issue of how the economic gains made in the aftermath of the stay-at-home could be consolidated or how they could be tied in with attempts to break the political wall of reaction which faced the movement. The main focus was not on 'the potency of working class forms of struggle' (42) but on Lutuli's call for a united front, including the United Party, to campaign for the defeat of the Nationalists and to express 'our desire for a United Party victory' (43). Lutuli had had no illusions in the United Party. In 1954 he had remarked that 'the long awaited for new native policy of the United Party can be described as being a mark-time order by drill-master Mr Strauss with an occasional "march-backward" order' (44). He described the UP as a party that 'poisons you slowly while the Nationalists murder you most ruthlessly'. Nonetheless he now argued that a United Party victory would 'provide opportunities for white and non-whites to come together' (45). Lutuli's rationale was that 'we are for widespread activity among the voteless peoples at election time so that the voices and opinions of the voteless may be taken into

account seriously by the voters before they dare saddle us with another five years of Nationalist rule' (46). Lutuli called for a day of mass gatherings, prayer and dedication to coincide with the election,

In putting forward this position, Lutuli was speaking for Congress as a whole. Oliver Tambo claimed that 'the significance of the timing of the campaign is to bring home to the electorate the biggest problems of our country which are being ignored by party politicians' (47). The Communist Party also supported the election campaign, calling for the creation of a popular front with all 'anti-Nats' including the United Party to get rid of the Nationalists. The Communist Party leader, Michael Harmel, called for a victory for the United Party, urging them to 'meet the people's leaders, . . . recognise the justice of their demands, . . . and end the anachronism of the traditional type of despotism' (48). He emphasised that 'the campaign would force the United Party to tell the truth and open the eyes of the electorate' (49). No doubt a defeat of the Nationalists would have seriously weakened the apartheid state, but the problem lay in what Congress could do to facilitate their defeat in a whites-only election.

SACTU itself campaigned for a national strike in support of £1 a day minimum wage, shorter hours, trade union recognition and an end to the pass laws. A number of regional worker conferences were held where the slogan 'Asinamali, sifunamali' ('we have no money, we want money') resounded as workers demanded action over wages and passes. *New Age*

reported that 'the resentment and indignation of the workers was simmering to boiling point' as they 'struggled desperately on the one hand against soaring living costs on his starvation wages while on the other hand he was subjected to the remorseless process of endless pass raids, thus living in constant dread of deportation from the urban areas' (50). The workers wanted action. Looking back to his days as a SACTU organiser and Communist Party member, Ben Turok observed that 'working class comrades became more involved and people with a class ideology came to the fore... The pressures of the proletarian elements were stronger'. Turok, however, revealed much about the perspectives of Congress and the Communist Party when he added that 'one in fact had to be careful that this tendency did not become hegemonic... This was always recognised. Care was taken not to frighten off the petty bourgeois elements' (51).

The National Workers' Conference was convened in March 1958, a large gathering attended by 1673 trade union delegates and 3000 observers. It was resolved that there 'should be a week of national stay-at-home protest and demonstrations in support of the people's demands' (52). In the face of some opposition from within its own ranks, SACTU was prevailed upon by Congress leaders to merge its strike call with the ANC's call for mass action at election time. Thus the twin slogans of the campaign became 'Forward to a pound a day victory' and 'Nats must go'. In practice, this meant that the stay-at-home, scheduled by SACTU to straddle the election day, focussed on the election, whilst the demands for a £1 a day, trade union recognition and the abolition of the

pass laws took on secondary status. As SACTU's official historians put it, 'the strike call had become less and less a SACTU-orientated campaign and more and more one focussing on the white elections' (53). Harmel saw the significance of the National Workers' Conference as putting pressure on the white electorate to understand the 'iron realities' of South Africa, concluding that for this reason the conference would be seen 'as a major turning point in history' (54)

The National Workers Conference appears to have been convened by the NCC of Congress rather than by SACTU. The Conference statement was issued by the ANC without mentioning SACTU and Lutuli stressed that the Conference was not exclusively a trade union affair. It would appear that SACTU's own structures of accountability and decision-making were by-passed, just as its own trade union demands were politically re-directed. The actual response of Congress to the Workers Conference resolutions aggravated the problem. The ANC refused to put its own name to the stay-at-home call and instead directed its energies to the white electorate. Pamphlets were to be put under the doors of white voters calling for a recognition of the right of the african people to 'share in the shaping of their own destinies' (55). In the light of this electoral policy, Congress then overrode the Workers' Conference decisions, ruling that the stay-at-home should be only three days long and not a week, that it should be undertaken only 'where possible' and that there should be no picketing. It also declared that the stoppage was not to be directed against commerce and industry but against the government.

The response of black workers to the stay-at-home call was uneven. Most commentators have called it a failure but the evidence of the first day of the action is less clear-cut. It seems that the strike was 50% effective in the Eastern Cape, 40% in Durban and significant in the Sophiatown and Newclare townships of Johannesburg. The response of the ANC, however, was clear-cut; although the stay-at-home was intended to last for three days, Oliver Tambo called it off after one day, declaring that 'the purpose of the protest had in the main been achieved. The one day work stoppage had ensured that the grievances and aspirations of the people were considered while the country was engaged in the serious question of choosing a government' (56). This decision was hotly contested in certain areas. In Port Elizabeth, where according to Luckhardt and Wall momentum for the strike was picking up at the end of day one, trade union leaders were 'upset with the decision - especially as it had been made without their consultation' (57). Moses Mabhida recalled that, though the ANC leadership had not been involved enough in the organisation of the campaign, 'in Durban we thought it was most successful. Dockers were out, . . . the Whites in the suburbs even supported us' (58). In the decision to call off the strike, SACTU was not apparently consulted and there was an angry response from the Management Committee and other SACTU members over their seemingly servile role in the Congress Alliance (59). In Sophiatown and Newclare, workers held out for the full three days amid riots and police violence (60), but the whole affair had been taken out of the hands of the unions.

As far as the trade union movement was concerned, its own initiatives were lost in the electoral campaign. As far as the electoral campaign was concerned, the strategy was a disaster. The United Party was no friend of black people and ANC support was about the last thing in the world the party wanted in its competition with the Nationalists. Far from responding to the Congress appeal, the United Party sought to distance itself as far as possible from Congress, basing its electoral strategy on wooing white workers on the same terrain as the ruling Nationalists. The result of the election was a decisive victory for the Nationalist Party, who for the first time won for themselves a bare majority of the white vote. The representation of the United Party was decimated, the Labour Party lost all its five seats and Strijdom declared that the Nationalists would maintain 'the traditional way of life of our country' (61). Most commentators have shared the view of Duma Nokwe, the ANC's Assistant General Secretary, that 'the overall picture was one of failure... bitterly disappointing, humiliating and exceedingly depressing' (62).

Nonetheless in his evaluation of the strike, Lutuli argued that its primary objectives had been achieved in that black people ceased to regard elections as a white man's affair (63). This may have been so but the problem was that the election was almost exclusively a white affair. Lutuli, for all the strength of his liberal spirit, looked to the Nationalists to 'mend their ways' or to the white electorate to 'give the country a progressive government'. The National Executive Committee of the ANC considered that the election results had shattered the

illusions of change through electoral means (64) but evaded the question of whose illusions were shattered, since it was the ANC itself which had sought to channel working class militancy into an electoral mould. The Executive analysed the weaknesses of the strike in technical terms; inadequate preparation, insufficient organisation, too little political education, too much reliance on coercion to sustain the strike and disunity within the Transvaal ANC owing to the opposition of the Africanist wing. It upheld the view nonetheless that 'no one can doubt... the impact this decision had on the whole country. Indeed it ... marks a turning point in our politics. We can no longer ... allow the minority to elect without our intervention' (65). The question it did not address was why intervention was tailored not to a show of strength by the black working class but to an accommodation with a largely imaginary middle class liberalism.

On the left criticism came from all quarters, including the Communist Party. An editorial in *New Age* suggested that 'the overall picture was one of failure by the workers to respond - workers lacked the confidence that their organisations would see the fight through' (66). It saw lack of organisation as the key to the campaign's failure;

It is significant that the stoppage was most complete wherever organisation was best... Slogans are not good enough. The only answer is to build the strength of the people on sure foundations to organise the workers to give them machinery in which they have confidence. (67)

This was true but did not address the fact was that the existing

structures of trade union organisation in Congress had been overridden in the course of the campaign. The banned trade union official and Communist Party member, Dan Tloome, also argued that for mass action to succeed strong trade union organisation was essential, blaming the ANC for its failure to understand the importance of trade unions. He also criticised the confusion of issues behind the strike:

The average African... had been told that the intention was to dissuade White voters from electing another Nationalist Government; he had been told that the struggle was for £1 a day; he had been told that the demonstration was an anti-apartheid one. No doubt he supported each specific issue, but the trilogy of pleas was too complex. (68)

Tloome saw the slogan 'Defeat the Nats' as 'wrong and misleading' since 'the slogan led a considerable section of the people to believe that the Congresses were in favour of the United Party coming into power, as a party capable of solving our problems' (69). This critique of the aims of the strike was echoed by the Durban trade unionist, Roley Arenstein, who argued that 'black workers did not identify with the call' since the elections were 'too remote a factor from their daily lives' (70).

Trotskyite left-wingers in Congress, centered around the journal *Analysis*, drew a deeper class analysis of the issues behind the election campaign's failure. They did not disagree with the slogan 'Nats Out' but argued that 'to leave the slogan at that is to say the United Party must govern'. It was not enough to hope that the United Party would 'show some sensitivity to democratic opinion at home and abroad'; nor was it

enough to blame the PAC for disunity, especially as 'far too many of the leaders (of Congress) stoop to employ the same methods'. For them the fundamental point was that 'until a working force emerges on its own platform and with its own programme, Congress will continue to witness this set of struggles for leadership'. The Workers Conference brought in thousands of workers who were not organised in trade unions but who supported Congress; 'this strengthening was to be welcomed but it was the shift of leadership out of the hands of workers' representatives to the all-class leadership of Congress that made us uneasy'. Why was so much effort put into the electoral defeat of the Nationalists when *New Age* declared three times that there was no chance of getting the United Party in? Why in the month between the call for a stay-away at the Workers' Conference and the election did Congress tarry while the state prepared? In the Transvaal it took eleven days before any steps were taken; then the four-person organising committee never functioned; attempts at organisation in Sophiatown and elsewhere were delayed; then Lutuli wrote in *New Age* that every individual should decide for himself and each area to decide for itself whether to go to work. (70)

Recalling the critique he among others posed in *Analysis* three years before, Baruch Hirson argued as follows:

The leadership of Congress had transferred an essentially working class campaign into a broad political front and placed at the fore a false slogan which related to the coming general election... We cannot say definitely that the campaign would have succeeded but there could have been a greater response if

the slogan had been confined to '£1 a day' - a slogan which had the support of the entire urban working class. It could have been more successful if the trade union movement had been the centre of the campaign and if the appeal had been directed mainly to the industrial workers,... Whereas an economic struggle can get a response when the demand has the support of workers, a political strike, directed at affecting an all-white election, cannot get the response that was needed to keep the worker at home.' (72)

His was a penetrating critique but characterised by the same tendency to syndicalism that had been present in the Progressive Trade Union Group in the 1940s. The subordination of the economic demands of the workers to the political orientation of Congress was one aspect of the problem, but black workers had shown their willingness to fight over political issues. The 1957 stay-at-home had been called on the basis of political as well as economic demands and had won a large response. A significant number of black workers did respond to the strike call over the election despite all the confusion. All this did not indicate an inability on the part of black workers to identify with political issues beyond the workplace. The problem lay not just in the subordination of economics to politics but in the substance of the politics which prevailed. In a later article Hirson developed his anti-parliamentarism writing that:

The African could not be called upon to intervene in parliamentary affairs which did not affect him appreciably. The African is far too wary to enter battle when victory can only lead to a United Party victory. Verwoed must go - but not in order to be replaced by Graaf,... The African people are not

interested in 'white politics'. It is not that the African will only respond to bread-and-butter politics but that he can see little reason for intervening where little or nothing can be achieved and when the methods proposed are suspect, (73)

Congress was right, however, that the africans did have an interest even in the replacement of Verwoed by Graaf, if only to weaken the political base of the apartheid state.

The real problem was not that Congress sought to intervene in the white election but it lay rather in the form of intervention which Congress adopted. Needing to harness the economic demands of workers to a political programme for democratic change, it instead justified the subordination of working class struggle to the need it felt not to alienate middle class opinion. Analysis put the issue succinctly: 'in South Africa, where the non-white middle class is so weak, we can see no reason for making so many concessions to their ideology. Congress in our opinion must move over to the left and the working class must emerge as a class force to lead the struggle' (74). The question which remained entirely unresolved by these criticisms, however, was what concretely was meant by Congress 'moving to the left' and by the working class emerging as 'a class force to lead the struggle'. We shall see very different answers put forward.

Gender, class and nationalism

It was not only in relation to trade unionism that the class perspective of Congress was evidenced, Black women were largely absent from trade unions but nonetheless played a vital role in building the working class movement in the latter half of the 1950s. The focus of women's protest was against the pass laws and in particular their extension to african women. For african women desperate to escape from rural impoverishment and to make a living in the towns, the extension of the pass laws spelt disaster. The impetus behind their often heroic resistance came from below and much of it occurred without any formal political organisation. It was supported by the two women's organisations within Congress, the ANC Women's League and the Federation of South African Women, and by the Congress leadership itself, though they related to it in different and conflicting ways. The readiness of the Federation and to a lesser extent the Women's League to respond to the militancy of the movement from below met with a more cautious and conservative approach from the Congress leadership. Until 1958, while the militancy of african women was high, the initiative lay with the Federation and its approach to the women's anti-pass campaign. After 1958, as the tide of militancy within the anti-pass campaign began to ebb, the initiative was transferred to Congress.

In 1955 Black Sash, a radical white women's organisation, held vigils outside the Union buildings in Pretoria in defence of the constitution. Soon after the Federation, responding to the intensification of pass and permit raids on the Rand, mobilised 2000 women in an illegal rally in the heart of white Pretoria. Petitions were signed on a wide range of issues from forced removals to ghetto housing, Bantu education, black poverty and passes, emphasising the responsibility which society placed upon women: 'we have not come here to beg or to plead but to ask for what is our right as mothers, as women and as citizens of our country... We speak from our hearts as mothers, as women' (75). Shortly before the demonstration, the government announced its intention to issue women with 'reference books', starting with women in the rural areas and small towns. At the first place to be visited, Winburg, the centre of the 1913 Free State anti-pass resistance, nearly 1500 women were induced to take out the new reference books before local women requested help from the ANC. When Lilian Ngoyi visited the town, she found women ready to turn to civil disobedience and pass-burning in the tradition of the women's protests of 1913 (76). Against ANC advice, women activists collected their newly issued passes, marched with them to the magistrate's office and publicly burnt them.

Winburg acted as a spark for many other areas. In the next six months, during which time no more passes were issued to women, the Federation and the Women's League organised hundreds of local marches, petitions and protests, particularly in the East Rand where municipalities were controlling the presence of african women through residence permits. 360

african domestic workers, for instance, threatened by new regulations prohibiting flat cleaners and servants from living in, marched in protest. The authorities used increasingly intimidatory tactics to impose the passes: threatening husbands whose wives refused the passes with loss of jobs, denying pensions or medical treatment to women without reference book numbers, using employers to register their female labour, even refusing to bury the dead without a reference book number. It is an interesting comment on South African 'legality' that at this time the carrying of passes by african women was not yet legally mandatory. The police violently dispersed demonstrations with baton charges, severe penalties were imposed under the Criminal Law Amendment Act on women who burnt their passes, two women in Lichtenburg died in a fight with the police. In Standerton, on the arrival of the mobile unit issuing passes, the entire location, men and women, stayed away from work and buses were boycotted. Women marched in groups of eight to the magistrate's office; after the first group was detained, hundreds more demanded to be arrested. Eventually they were driven away by a baton charge and 914 were charged (77). By the end of the year, some of the Federation's main leaders were arrested and charged with treason alongside other Congress activists.

The women's anti-pass movement linked up organically with the growth of rural resistance in the reserves. The most important instance occurred when in March 1957 the mobile pass unit arrived in the small town of Zeerust in the Transvaal. Its boycott by most of the women in the town - out of 4000 women in the village only 76 took passes (78) - met with the

sympathy of the local Chief of the Bafarutshe people in the area. When the Chief was deposed by government officials and replaced with a stooge, news soon spread to the Bafarutshe migrants in the urban areas of Witwatersrand who sent two delegations, one of men and one of women, back to Zeerust. A boycott of the local school and trader immediately followed the delegation of women. A people's trial of the men who had in 1952 made complaints against the now-deposed chief followed the men's delegation. The accused men were reportedly beaten and sentenced to death before being saved by the police. Thereafter the houses of those seen as collaborators were burnt in revenge for extreme police violence. Official retribution centered around terror raids by the Police Mobile Column but also included the trials of many women pass resisters (most of whom were acquitted because it was not yet illegal for women to carry a pass) and administrative punishments. In their hundreds, women showed the power of collective civil disobedience as they burnt their passes and presented themselves for arrest by the police. James Fairburn wrote at the time that it was 'almost impossible to find a Bafurutshe woman possessing a pass, outside of those working on White farms and those living in Zeerust's location. As a direct result of the struggle against passes, everything connected with the Government has become suspect and is resisted' (79). As the state-appointed 'chiefs' and the police intensified their reign of terror, a virtual civil war broke out in the reserve, leading to a breakdown in the flimsy economy of the area and the flight of thousands to Bechuanaland until the revolt was quelled.

The Native Affairs Department Commission branded the ANC as the root cause of the tribe's troubles and called for its banning. In the main, however, the ANC was not involved. Mary Benson commented that it was 'a weakness of the ANC that it seldom rushed representatives to these rural areas at the first sign of discontent. The people had suffered to the point where they could bear no more. But they had no organisation' (80). James Fairburn, a radical journalist of the time, had some equally critical observations on the role of the ANC:

Far from giving a lead to the Bafurutshe, the African National Congress has lagged behind them so pathetically that even today it has no real organisation in the Reserve. Individual members of the Bafurutshe Association (migrants in the townships) are of course very often also members of the ANC, but their primary motivation has been the protection of their womenfolk and families back home in the Reserve. It should perhaps not be surprising if latterly the desire for revenge had entered into their activities. It should not be thought that events in the Marico district are an isolated episode in Verwoed's South Africa, as close parallels can be given throughout the country, not only for the spontaneous and deep resistance of African women to the acceptance of passes but to the reaction of tribes to attempts to move them from their land and depose their Chiefs... Much will depend on the extent to which the Bafurutse will wish or be able to link their struggle with the wider one ... for on their own they will soon be crushed by the state and irreparably consumed by civil war. When a nailed boot descends on small pebbles, they do not shoot upward but grind against one

another. (81)

A huge wave of women's protest was sweeping the country. In the first seven months of 1957, the Federation estimated that around 50,000 women took part in 38 demonstrations against pass laws in 30 different centres. The key question facing the national liberation movement was how to relate to the explosive energies released by women; the key question facing the women was how to win national support before the nailed boot of the state crushed them.

It was in the course of these developments that disagreement broke out between the Women's Federation and the ANC. The tension came to a head in the Johannesburg anti-pass protests of 1958. By this time the government had succeeded in issuing a million pass books to african women, mainly in the rural areas. The acid test came when the government started to take on women in the large towns and cities. It did this obliquely at first, by making registration as a nurse dependent on having a pass. Then it struck against domestic workers, always a vulnerable group, telling white householders to insure that their domestic servants became registered. In most of the major towns there was little resistance, but in Johannesburg a largely grass-roots campaign of mass civil disobedience broke out, with several thousands of women deliberately courting arrest and charge under the Criminal Laws Amendment Act. Active support was given by the Federation of South African Women, who argued for the enlargement of the campaign and the non-payment of fines and bail in order to clog up the judicial system.

The Congress leadership, however, overruled the Federation saying that bail was to be paid and no more volunteers to be sought. They argued that it was placing a large financial burden on Congress to bail women out of gaol, particularly as their finances were stretched already by the defence costs incurred in the long drawn out Treason Trial. The Women's Federation responded with irony that it was not the arrested women who wished to be bailed out but their husbands who were unilaterally bailing them out since they could not cope at home alone! Beneath the rhetoric the ANC stressed that the anti-pass campaign was under their direction, not that of the women, and that it was not obliged to consult with the Federation or any other body 'on each and every aspect', a position accepted by the Federation women. A mass demonstration in Johannesburg planned by the Federation was cancelled by Congress and in its place a 'parade' of about three or four thousand took place. Congress enjoined education and organisation rather than confrontation. At this moment, when there was a lull in the momentum of the anti-pass campaign, the ANC decided that 'the first phase had ended' and called it off.

The rights and wrongs of this decision were strongly debated at the time and have remained the object of conflicting assessments in recent commentaries. The Joint Executives of the Women's League and the Federation expressed their regret at the ANC's decision 'for there had been encouraging signs that had a lead been given for further demonstrations... it would have been followed. Nevertheless the authority of the ANC was regarded as supreme'(82). Perhaps it was

better, as Helen Joseph - herself a leading member of the Federation - has argued, to call off the civil disobedience at its height than to allow it to fizzle out slowly. In her history of the movement Julie Wells has supported this view, arguing that 'the Federation of South African Women tried to keep the pass question alive in 1957 and early '58 but found the interest waning somewhat' (83). Another commentator, June Rose Nala, has made the perceptive point that when a largely spontaneous social movement loses its momentum it is easy to blame the leadership for an occurrence the roots of which lie deeper:

Whilst the temptation of blaming the untimely criticism of the ANC as having been the cause of the decline, this argument does not do the situation justice... It is often tempting in situations of temporary defeat to focus on this level of reasoning in order to find scapegoats, but by doing so the FSAW missed an opportunity of consolidating and embarking on the realistic analysis which would have better prepared them for the future. (84)

The decision of Congress to call off the 'first stage' of the anti-pass campaign was highly controversial; so too was its failure to take the campaign into its promised second stage. Thus in 1959 the FSAW's report concluded that 'the Federation awaits direction from the ANC as to the course which the anti-pass campaign will follow and requests that this direction may be given in the very near future... Women await with impatience the active entry of men into the anti-pass campaign'. Echoing this position Cheryl Walker has argued that 'it was essential for the

ANC to follow up on the women's campaign. Having submitted to the ANC's authority, the women were entitled to expect that the participation of the men in the rest of the campaign would be active. In this they were disappointed' (85). This request was repeated the following year in 1959, but in the Federation's view was never answered. The ANC designated 1959 'the greatest anti-pass year ever' and planned a series of demonstrations for which the Federation offered its support. Most commentators agree, though, with the spirit of the Women's League's critique that 'it seems that the campaign against passes is being ignored because very little has been done to intensify the campaigns' (86). With the calling off of the Johannesburg campaign, the Federation's anti-pass activity virtually ground to a halt.

In explaining these events, Cheryl Walker has emphasised the question of patriarchy within the ANC. She has documented the reluctance of men within the ANC to support political participation by women and the grudging way in which ANC men sometimes supported the campaign against passes (87). Walker quoted one speaker at an ANC anti-pass meeting as saying for instance that 'the government cannot give your woman pass if you do not want to, because the woman she is under the control of a man' (88). While patriarchalism was doubtless present within Congress circles, the overall picture was more contradictory. At the same time as the Congress leadership sought to use its authority to subordinate the women's organisations, it was involved in the women's campaigns through its affiliated women's organisations, it endorsed their contribution to

the national struggle and opened its own ranks to more involvement by women.

In spite of the differences the women's organisations had with Congress, they accepted its authority and shared many of its ideas, including its commitment to non-violence and the primacy of the national struggle. The Federation believed that it could not and should not go outside the Congress as a separate women's movement and was ready to subordinate itself whenever a serious difference of opinion emerged. The reason offered by Cheryl Walker for this was that the women's campaigns never overcame their sectional character and could not of themselves construct an alternative focus of leadership to that of Congress. In Walker's words, they 'related to the eradication of specific abuses rather than forming part of a coherent, long term strategy for political change.' (89). The political reason which Walker does not pursue, was that for the Communist Party women who played a leading role in the Federation, party discipline came before what they themselves perceived as the needs of the struggle. Accordingly they took the road not of generalising the lessons of the women's struggles outward into the liberation movement as a whole, but rather of subsuming the women's struggles to the national policy of Congress. The Women's Federation withdrew from its mass civil disobedience campaign in 1958 for the same reasons that SACTU withdrew from its week-long stay-away that same year; because the united front strategy pursued by Congress was to restrain such forms of worker militancy and because leaders in the Federation just as in SACTU recognised the ultimate authority of Congress. As a result african women

on the ground were left without a nationally based organisation to back them. Writing in 1958, Helen Joseph spelt out what she saw as the political importance of women in the wider struggle;

The resistance of women... is not isolated from the struggle of the African people against the whole pass system and cheap labour policy. Today it is the women who are in the forefront of that struggle... In this vast, unmeasured and yet inadequately organised potential of the resistance of women to passes, lies one of the sharpest weapons against... apartheid. And it is not too late. (90)

The inability of Congress to realise this potential was due not only to the patriarchal relation of men to women but equally to the class relation of Congress to the masses. This only becomes evident when the women's question is seen in its larger political context.

Community and class

Analogous issues were raised by the relation of Congress to the community struggles waged in the black townships on issues of social consumption and in particular the bus boycotts mounted in opposition to fare increases. The bus boycotts had a political significance beyond their original targets, for what was at issue was not simply opposition to fare increases, in which respect some of the boycotts were successful, but the building of independent community organisations and the winning of real municipal reforms. For black workers forced to live in townships away from the industrial and commercial areas, transport was often the second biggest part or between 25% and 40% of their domestic budget. Any fare increase was deeply felt by workers. Buses were overcrowded, badly ventilated and insufficient in number. For black wage workers and the urban poor, like the washerwomen delivering their bundles of washing to the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, their working day included the difficult and expensive journey to and from work. In Alexandra most workers spent over three hours a day commuting. The issue which triggered the boycotts was economic, a rise in fares, but the ramifications were political.

In Evaton the movement was said to be '95% successful' (91) in the support it received from the workers who used the bus for the thirty mile journey to Johannesburg. Picketing was aggressive, including assaults on would-be passengers and bus company employees and the

burning of buses. Organisation through the Evaton People's Transport Council (EPTC) was based on weekly mass meetings which determined the policies of the boycott and the movement was overwhelmingly working class with the Property Owners Association not being included on the Council. The demands put on the private bus company included not only a reversion to the old fares but a number of other demands concerning the nature of the service provided: bus shelters, african inspectors, a timetable to be drawn up by the EPTC, an undertaking by the bus company not to raise fares without consultation with the EPTC at the pain of a £500 fine, concessionary rates for students, a bus depot within the township and so on. When the boycott movement gained a concession by the bus company on the fares issue, it held out until it also won many of its other demands, though it was not successful in its opposition to the renewal of the bus company's licence nor in its bid to set up its own transport co-operative.

In Evaton the boycott movement was fraught with intra-community fighting, as vigilantes known as the 'Russians' and drawn from the 'blanketed' Basotho migrants were used by the authorities physically to attack and kill the boycott supporters. A vigorous defence was mounted against the vigilantes with a number of killings on both sides. The EPTC placed demands on the state that vigilantes be arrested, disarmed and endorsed out of the area, but without success. With little state administration or provision of services in the town, the boycott movement had behind it a tradition of smaller bus boycotts in the 1950s and a political tradition dating back to the 1940s in which demands for

some kind of local self-government had been put. These political demands were not, however, pursued in the course of the boycott and after the boycott campaign was over the state imposed its own full gamut of municipal regulations on Evaton. No lasting community organisation was consolidated and the boycott remained largely isolated within Evaton, not least because the local leadership was Africanist in orientation and at odds with the ANC establishment, which 'had nothing to do with the boycott and took very little part in it' (92).

The political situation in Alexandra in 1957 was different. An attempt in 1957 by the PUTCO bus company to raise the bus fare to Johannesburg by one penny led to a three month boycott of the buses, with workers walking or taking alternative transport for the eighteen miles to and from Johannesburg, coining the slogan 'Azikhwelwa' or 'we do not ride'. The boycott soon extended to other areas of Johannesburg and Pretoria and sympathy boycotts took place in Bloemfontein and Port Elizabeth. One participant who has written on the boycott, Dan Mokonyane, was probably not exaggerating when he said that at its peak the boycott movement involved nearly 300,000 people (93). A broad organising committee was set up to direct the boycott. Known as the Alexandra People's Transport Committee (APTC), it comprised a number of different political groups; a 'standholders association' which represented property owners in Alexandra; the official ANC which constituted the largest single group in the committee and had recently divested itself of its former business leadership; two ANC splinter groups - the Africanists under Madzunya (who won the local ANC elections) and the conservative National Minded

Bioc; and the Movement for Democracy of Content (MDC) which was comprised of a small group of radical intellectuals (including Mokonyane). The Society of Young Africa (SOYA), the youth wing of the Unity Movement, was invited to join the committee but declined. Mokonyane reports that the joke went round that SOYA 'which always preached the boycott weapon ... boycotted everything including the bus boycott' (94). The APTC reported back to mass meetings in the community evincing a notable degree of democratic accountability. The high level of community organisation generated by the boycott was indicated, according to Mokonyane, by the virtual cessation of serious crime, the refusal of the people to be drawn into stoning the buses and the unusual presence of whites in the township until midnight.

The situation faced by the committee was one of considerable police repression and staunch opposition from certain sections of business and government. Nonetheless it also won substantial support from liberals within the white community and a willingness to reach some form of compromise on the part of the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce and some local politicians. As exhaustion from the long boycott set in, political divisions grew sharper within the organising committee. When PUTCO and the national government threatened withdrawal of the bus service in Alexandra altogether, pressure to reach a compromise settlement grew stronger, actively encouraged by the Liberal Party.

The role played by the ANC in these circumstances was controversial. Baruch Hirson has argued that they were out of touch with the new militancy which was rocking the area;

At a very early stage the ANC pressed for negotiations and an early end to the boycott. So eager were they to compromise that they supported the bus company's phoney solution of paying the full fare and later refunding the extra penny. This was indignantly rejected by a mass meeting in the township and the leadership passed to a small group of militants... The ANC were unable to respond to the new militancy'. (95)

Lutuli accepted the limited role played by the ANC in organising the boycott, saying that 'the boycott was essentially a movement of the common people' and that 'the ANC had no part in organising it' (96). He agreed that the Congress only came in when the Chamber of Commerce offered an 'honourable conclusion' to the boycott;

The difficulty was that the boycott was such an unqualified success that many people wanted to extend it whether or not the boycotters' demands were met. To us it seemed that if the declared objective could be attained, the boycott should cease. We were very much aware of the hardship of rank-and-file boycotters and aware too that if opinion became divided the whole boycott might fizzle out and the Government intention ultimately triumph. For these reasons we threw the weight of our argument in on the side of terminating the boycott if the initial demands of the people were met. There is an end to endurance. This is a reality which wise leadership must take into account. In the event the demands were met completely ...

We did, however, have to endure some stiff criticism from the 'diehards'. (97)

There was also criticism from the Communist Party, as when Michael Harmel attacked the 'marked failure of ... Congress to give positive leadership to the people of Alexandra' (98). He does not, however, appear to have offered any alternative strategy.

Among the 'diehards' the most articulate was Dan Mokonyane, whose bitter denunciation of the ANC's role is written up in *Lessons of Azikhwelwa*. Rejection of the ANC by its Africanist wing and the subsequent formation of the PAC were heavily influenced by the perceived failure of the ANC in this situation. Under the slogan of 'rainy Monday' Mokonyane's MDC with the support of the Africanists propogated a move to extend the bus boycott into a stay-away and link up with the £1 day campaign being initiated by SACTU. The ANC after some confusion and division rejected these calls on the ground, according to Mokonyane, that 'we cannot and ... must not call for a strike, because we were not a trade union' (99). Instead, under pressure from the stall-holders, who had made their own secret deal with PUTCO, and from Liberals who urged a settlement, the ANC played an intermediary role. When a compromise deal was again offered, ANC pamphlets declared it a victory and told people they should ride the buses, even though the proposals were rejected at the mass meetings of the organising committee. Following on from this initiative, the boycott crumbled, Mokonyane claims that such was the unpopularity of Congress at this point that it could not organise a meeting in Alexandra 'because of their recent treachery' (100)

The case against the settlement put by Mokonyane and the ANC's critics was first, that the offer was temporary with no guarantee of future funding; second, the popular meetings at which the compromise had been discussed firmly rejected them; third, the demands of the mass meeting that PUTCO should pay compensation for the arrests and deaths that had occurred as a result of police action during the boycott were not met; and finally that the deal was applicable to Johannesburg routes only and offered nothing to the bus boycotters in Pretoria, who pursued their boycott well into 1958. Over and above the details of this critique, however, were deeper differences over strategy. The 'diehards' saw the ANC as selling out through its decision to call the boycott off, the undemocratic manner in which its decision was taken and its refusal to extend the boycott. Mokonyane and the Africanists drew the lesson that the political leadership provided by the ANC was inadequate to the tasks it faced and had to be replaced. They attributed the problem to the subordination of spontaneity to planning, african nationalism to white liberalism and mass militancy to conservative leaders. Critical of what they saw as the ANC's alienation from the masses, they offered in its place an idealisation of mass african spontaneity. In reality mass militancy and extreme african nationalism had their limits. There must have been a genuine risk of the boycott collapsing if it had been pursued further. The spontaneism and nationalism of the 'diehards' did not provide an answer to these problems.

The boycott revealed in the words of Ruth First that 'Africans in the towns are industrialised, settled, politically aware individuals,

organised, articulate, purposeful' (101). The question was how far Congress was able to tap its political potential. As the Alexandra boycott drew to a close, nearby in the Western Areas of Johannesburg there were mass protests against the introduction of permits designed to stop people entering the township and a large march of over 30,000 people in what the *New Age* described as almost a 'general strike' (which according to Mokonyane senior ANC men opposed). In reply to moves from the left to extend the boycott into a general strike and to link up with SACTU's trade union-based £1 a day minimum wage campaign, the ANC channelled the energies of the boycott movement into its 1957 one day stay-at-home. In Mokonyane's view this enabled the ANC to 'pick the fruit' of the struggle for itself while its own credibility in Alexandra was low.

The ANC's alleged betrayal of the militants of Evaton and Alexandra followed the logic of its programme: to contain working class militancy within definite bounds for the sake of the 'anti-Nat' united front. By the time of the 1958 election community protest in the black townships had subsided. The Africanists blamed the decline of urban mass militancy on the ANC's leadership but the reverse was in fact of greater weight. Rather than the electoral strategy of Congress having de-railed the working class movement, the weaknesses of the working class movement allowed the electoral strategy of Congress to come to the fore in 1958. The idealist method of the left critics of Congress led them to see the fall in mass militancy as the effect of leadership but not to see the nature of leadership as the effect of the weakness of the masses.

Ch. 10

The crisis of political leadership

The united front policy

The key to understanding Congress policy in this period lay in its quest to re-construct what it called a 'united front' in opposition to the Nationalists. The theoretical basis of this strategy was spelt out by leading figures in the ANC and particularly in the Communist Party. Brian Bunting put the policy thus:

In the struggle against the Nationalists a united front is absolutely necessary. For what is the purpose of the united front? It is the mobilisation of the masses of the people in active struggle against the apartheid tyranny. What do we mean by the masses of the people? In the first place all the millions of Non-European oppressed... Side by side with them we must aim to mobilise all other sections of the people, European and Non-European, who are prepared to for a variety of reasons to oppose particular aspects of the Nationalist policy... The needs of the struggle demand the creation of the broadest unity among anti-Nationalists... Congressmen, Liberals, Labourites, Black Sash and others. (1)

In an article entitled 'building a united front' Jo Matthews, who himself joined the Communist Party, wrote on similar lines:

As the Nationalist oppression becomes worse the call for a united front composed of all genuine opponents of apartheid becomes ever more insistent. It is perfectly natural that this should be so... The dictators of our country are compelled to threaten... all groups except those of the very tiny minority of monopolist mining magnates, landlords and industrialists... Under such conditions it become historically correct for the Progressive Movement to rally the people on the widest possible basis to resist and finally defeat the dictatorship. (2)

An editorial in *Liberation* presented the election strike as a vindication of the united front strategy, since 'the only way to defeat the Nationalists is by overwhelming and united pressure from all democrats in favour of radical electoral reform'. It concluded that 'the Congress emerged from the election period with immeasurably increased stature as the only genuine opposition' (3). The Congress theorists argued that many whites, including sections of capital, were beginning to think twice about the benefits of Nationalist rule. Sisulu for example wrote that 'there is no possibility of the Nationalists growing stronger than they are at present. They have played all their cards... in particular the Europeans of the country are gradually beginning to see that South Africa has no choice but to follow the road to a multi-racial society. (4)

Congress itself was depicted as a united front, but it was argued that in order to make the united front as broad as possible the Freedom Charter was too radical to serve as its basis. Thus Moses Kotane's booklet, *The Great Crisis Ahead*, put forward the view in 1957 that the unity of all anti-

Nationalist forces required 'courageous, united and decisive leadership', but not on the basis of the Freedom Charter which was too 'abstract' and 'far-reaching'. In reference to the stand against apartheid taken by such groups as the Labour Party, the Liberal Party, the Bishop of Johannesburg, Black Sash, the Institute of Race Relations and the students and staff of universities, Kotane noted that 'their rejection of apartheid does not mean that all these people have already accepted the democratic alternative contained in the Freedom Charter', and concluded that to build unity it would have been 'politically incorrect... to adopt so far-reaching a programme as the Freedom Charter' (5). So too Sisulu wrote that 'though Congressmen are convinced that the struggle for the Freedom Charter is the only correct policy, they are prepared and anxious to co-operate on specific issues with all who oppose any manifestation of apartheid... Congress realises that not all people who are opposed to apartheid accept the Freedom Charter' (6). Similarly in an article entitled 'Uncompromising struggle for the Freedom Charter', Jo Matthews wrote that the Freedom Charter should not be the basis of the United Front, since 'within the Congress Movement a higher form of unity upon essentials is required than in a broad united front which includes Liberals, Labourites, etc... who do not accept the Charter'. At the same time he declared that 'for its part the Congress naturally claims power of independent action... to express its differences from others clearly to protect its programme and extend its influence.' (7) Similarly an editorial in *Liberation* argued that 'the essence of a united front policy is that it is always based on opposition to dictatorship rather than common adherence to long term objectives... The Charter cannot serve as the basis for a united front. It is our blueprint for a people's democratic state and not a minimum programme for temporary

ends'. It too asked: 'does this mean that the Charter must be put into cold storage? A thousand times no!' (8)

In assessing this policy, it would appear that formally Congress was right not to turn its own political charter into an ultimatum before agreeing to engage in common action with other anti-apartheid forces. The thoroughly sectarian way in which the Unity Movement put forward acceptance of its Minimum Programme as a pre-condition of any form of alliance or common action offered a negative reference point of the alternative. It would appear too that formally Congress was right not to forego advocacy of its own political ideas as expressed in the Freedom Charter and not to refrain from criticism of its potential allies when their opposition to apartheid was unaccompanied by the positive commitment to universal suffrage in a unitary state expressed in the Charter. In this regard it appeared to have learnt from the weaknesses of the old popular front approach. Formally the united front policy of Congress assimilated the trotskyist view of a united front based on the slogan 'march separately but strike together', which attacked both the left sectarianism of 'third period' politics and the right opportunism of people's front politics. The shift in the language of Congress from 'people's front' to 'united front' reflected this formal change.

We have stressed the term 'formal' because the substantive content of the united front proposed by Congress in fact represented a return to the parameters of the people's front policies of the 1940s. First, as Congress

placed its emphasis on building the united front, the Freedom Charter was in fact put into cold storage or alternatively re-interpreted in a less radical light. We saw this earlier in our discussion of the Freedom Charter when leading congressites in the later 1950s argued that the idea of transferring the land, mines and monopolies to the people did not mean nationalisation or collectivisation but only the lifting of racial barriers to private ownership. In this regard Congress did not so much protect its independent programme as concede to middle class antipathies to any hint of socialism. Second, while the proponents of the 'united front' called for a combination of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary action (9), the interpretation of this policy made by Congress was to contain the extra-parliamentary wing of the movement within self-defined limits so as not to rock the boat of its anticipated parliamentary alliances. The united front was addressed to middle class public opinion rather than to the working class whose mass support (in the case of black workers) Congress presupposed. The old tendency to praise uncritically potential allies rather than engage with them, re-appeared for example in Kotane's idealised representation of the Labour Party as having 'brilliantly undertaken the burden of opposition which the UP leadership has so miserably failed to carry'.

The key to the united front policy adopted by Congress was that working class action was to be subordinated to the search for a parliamentary alliance centered around the Labour Party, Liberal Party, Black Sash, the radical clergy, the Institute for Race Relations and other mainly white liberal organisations. Many of these people were unenthusiastic about an

alliance with Congress, either because they saw it as too radical or as dominated by the Communist Party. In any event the combined force they comprised was hardly the stuff to overthrow a supposedly fascist government. At the same time the real motor of democratic change in South Africa, the working class, was disarmed.

Giving the official Communist Party view, Michael Harmel argued after the election campaign that the Congress movement was 'steadily winning the allegiance of the vast majority of the people' and drew the conclusion that 'herein lies the certainty of the defeat of the present form of Government and the victory of the South African revolution'. No government, he believed, could endure, 'however rigid its repression or seemingly powerful its forces, once the great majority of the people have taken the path of resolute resistance'. On how the government was to fall Harmel was vague: 'revolution need not involve violence. There have been plenty of examples in history where a combination of factors have been compelling enough to make a ruling class give way... without dragging the people through the agony of civil war. We can only hope that this may also be the case in South Africa. We cannot tell what exact form the changes will take, how exactly or when the changes will come' (10). The crucial point for Harmel was that apartheid was an anomaly which necessarily provoked the opposition of white as well as black society: 'nowhere outside the Union does a privileged minority claim to govern by divine right. This kind of despotism is a freak or an anachronism which cannot have much longer to survive' (11). An editorial in *Liberation* echoed the view that 'the Nationalists have come to the end of the road' since even 'the big business supporters

of the Party are beginning to have long and deep second thoughts about apartheid' (12).

If it were the case that significant sections of white society and big business were having second thoughts about apartheid - and there must be doubt since the electoral results were discouraging - this did not exhaust the question of how to relate to these sections. The election campaign revealed that the support of middle class public opinion was purchased at the expense of disarming the workers' own struggles. The question of whether to subordinate mass action to the support of the middle classes or the support of the middle classes to mass action was resolved in favour of the former. The results were not propitious. Among the more progressive sections of capital there were those who looked for an alternative to apartheid, but the driving force behind their concerns was not only that apartheid was an 'anomaly' in capitalist terms but rather that mass resistance was beginning to threaten the stability of the regime. Congress was not wrong to seek the support of the wavering middle classes but failed to see that the basis of this support lay in strengthening the power of labour.

A perceptive liberal critic of Congress strategy, Julius Lewin, wrote in an article entitled 'No Revolution around the Corner', that 'it was an illusion to suppose that South Africa, so obviously rotten with injustice, must be ripe for revolution (13)'. First, the state was strong in that the armed forces were loyal and the white polity more firmly behind apartheid

than ever. Second, while there had been a great deal of extra-parliamentary disorder, it was necessary to distinguish between revolution and disorder since popular protests were generally localised and easily subdued. Third, Congress strategy itself had no revolutionary content. If revolution was not around the corner, what of reform? Lewin argued that disbelief in the possibility of reform emerged from the apparent intransigence of the Nationalists and the failure of extra-parliamentary campaigns to win their demands. He argued, however, that the government was under some pressure to reform not just from below but also by big business and that the two main methods of protest used by Congress - passive resistance and the stay-away - were both limited in their efficacy as far as the winning of reforms was concerned. Lewin's perceptive conclusion was that what was required was a long-term strategic perspective based on building the trade union movement and fighting in this way for reform from below. As he put it:

Changes are likely to depend more on the slow and difficult emergence of effective trade unions than on any other single factor. The increasing employment of Africans in industry offers the best hope that in due time collective action will produce social change. (14)

The irony was that while Lewin's 'reformism' was based firmly on the ground of working class organisation, the 'revolutionism' of his critics in Congress prioritised the united front with labourites and liberals over the development of the labour movement.

The Africanists

As the crisis of political leadership came to a head in the aftermath of the election strike in 1958, the main african opposition to the 'united front' policies of Congress came from the Africanist minority in the ANC, notably in its Transvaal base, who finally broke loose from the ANC to form the Pan African Congress (PAC). The Africanists argued that subordination to white control, particularly COD and the Communist Party, had been the root cause of the failure of the election campaign. The Africanists had refused to support the strike from the start because it was 'left inspired' and five african trade unions on the Rand supported the Africanists' refusal to participate on trade union grounds:

We as responsible trade union leaders do not believe that the proposed decision will help native workers, many of whom are living below the breadline, to win better wages. Rather we believe it will harm our cause. Consequently we ask employers to cooperate to ensure as much as possible the safety of their workers. (15)

At the annual meeting of the Transvaal ANC in early November 1958 the Africanists who were present announced that they would launch out on their own, claiming that they were now the sole custodians of the Programme of Action and that they intended 'starting a political battle against white domination' (16). Emerging as a radical opposition to Congress, the PAC offered a political home to african militants who felt that the ANC was not replying to the mood of the african masses. Its effect was to channel

african discontent into a political blind alley at the end of which was a mix of economic trade unionism, anti-communism and black exclusivity.

The PAC attacked the multi-racialism of Congress on the grounds that equal representation for the four national organisations was 'a warped principle of equality' which guaranteed the dominance of the minority over the majority. The Consultative Committee of Congress was 'undemocratic in that each Congress irrespective of its membership is represented by an equal number of delegates'. This was but 'an aggressive invasion on the principle of majority rule'. Robert Sobukwe added that not only was multi-racialism inherently undemocratic but that the influence of other national groups in Congress blunted the sharp edge of african nationalism:

The Africans constitute the indigenous group... form the majority... are the most ruthlessly exploited... The African masses constitute the key to liberation and can be organised only under the banner of African nationalism... They must decide on methods of struggle without interference from either the so-called left wing or right-wing groups of the minorities. (17)

Sobukwe's critique of multi-racialism came from two incompatible sides. ;On the one hand, he saw it as fostering the same group antagonisms which have plagued the history of South Africa, arguing that 'if we have to retain the same group exclusiveness, we shall be transporting to the new Africa these very antagonisms'. 'Multi-racialism', he wrote, 'is racialism multiplied' (18). With little regard for consistency he nonetheless conceived of the abolition of group antagonisms only through the dominance and exclusivity of the african group, his aim being 'government of the African, by the

African, for the African'. The very idea of 'african' was elusive: at one time counterposed to other groups in South Africa and at another broadened out into 'everybody who owes loyalty to Africa and who is prepared to accept the democratic rule of an African majority, being considered an African' (19).

The 1959 Manifesto of the PAC strove for an overall political critique of the shortcomings of Congress. It argued that the Freedom Charter 'battered to European bigotry' but itself resorted to a xenophobic depiction of whites in South Africa as a 'foreign minority':

The 'leaders' consider South Africa... to belong to all who live in it, the alien dispossessors and the indigenous dispossessed. They regard as equals the foreign master and the indigenous slave... They are too naive to see that the interests of the subject people... are in sharp conflict with those of the white ruling class. The Charterist leadership is doing the oppressors' dirty job... seeing to it that the African is deprived for all time of his right to control the country... The African nation will not tolerate the existence of other national groups within the confines of one nation... All individuals must owe their first and only loyalty to the African nation. (20)

The clause in the Freedom Charter that 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it' was anathema to the Africanists. They saw it as meaning that the Charterists 'can have no real quarrel with those whites who would cut up the land into Bantustans and Whitestans'. According to the *Africanist* it displaced the enemy from a group of people to an abstract system:

The Charterists say that 'our people have been robbed of their birthright to land' by a form of government... They cannot face the truth that the people have been robbed by the whites. Hence the robber is an abstraction: a form of government. (21)

Indians too were conceived as a foreign minority group under the political leadership of a merchant class that identified with the oppressors. While those poor Indians who did not have the money to buy land outside the union or to go back to India 'could identify with us', first they had to 'regard themselves as debarred from all those businesses from which Africans are debarred... and accept Africanist leadership' before the PAC would cooperate with them. Without any apparent sense of contradiction the PAC declared in the same breath that it was 'for full democracy' in which 'colour will have no importance'. (22).

The PAC had a special antipathy to the Congress of Democrats, seen as a front for the Communist Party and re-named 'the Curse of Democracy'. Standing as candidate for the Presidency of the ANC in 1958, Madzunya declared that the Freedom Charter 'never really was a baby of the ANC' but rather 'the illegitimate child denied by its natural father COD' and that it represented an 'unholy alliance with elements of the exploiting class' in which 'the black masses who met at Kliptown were merely pawns' (23). With the same target in mind, Sobukwe rejected the 'totalitarianism which has become manifested in some states in the East in favour of full political democracy' and affirmed that 'it is not the intention of African states to change one master (western imperialism) for another (Soviet tutelage)' (24). It was certainly the case that South African Communists

extolled all things Soviet, from Sputnik to the repression of the Hungarian uprising of 1956 and indeed likened the PAC to the 'fascist' rebels in Hungary. The PAC's attack on stalinism, however, was extended into a rejection of working class politics *in toto* in South Africa:

Whites are steeped in Herrenvolk ideology, so much so that the idea of class struggle in which it is hoped to bring African workers alongside white workers in a common struggle against the capitalists can be escapist, illusory... The Africanists say that the issue of class struggle in South Africa is so insignificant as to play no part at all. (25)

The PAC's retreat from class was such that even the British worker was described as 'not a worker in the real sense of the word' since 'he is heavily subsidised by the toil and sweat and blood of the colonial slaves of Britain'. It adopted the watchword of Nkrumah rather than Marx; that 'the liberation of the African is the task of Africans. We Africans alone can emancipate ourselves'. Its ultra-nationalism did not permit the PAC to penetrate the class contradictions at the heart of the struggle.

The contradictions at the heart of the PAC were visible in its trade union work. The PAC drew those african unions whose unhappiness with SACTU came to a head in the 1958 election strike into a new trade union body, FOFATUSA (the Federation of Free African Trade Unions of South Africa), which was set up with ICFTU money and support and in conjunction with SATUC as its african parallel wing. What started perhaps as a left-wing split turned into a rather conservative, cold-war and racially defined trade union centre dependent on a white trade union parent-body. In the name of trade

union autonomy FOFATUSA attacked SACTU for capitulating to political pressures from Congress, acting as 'distant spokesmen of the totalitarian East' and canalising 'our cause as workers without our having a voice in framing our future as workers'. FOFATUSA defended its right 'to express our opinion as far as trade unionism is concerned without paying any allegiance to party political organisations', but its alternative view of trade unionism was that it should be confined to 'bread and butter issues'.

The PAC's *raison d'être* was to give political voice to african mass militancy. Its spontaneist rhetoric extolled the revolutionary power of mass action: 'all we are required to do is show the light and the masses will find the way' said Sobukwe in 1949 (26) and he re-iterated it ten years later. No love was lost between the ANC and the PAC who directed great energy into mutual denunciation and sabotage, with the PAC providing an easy target for the ANC's charges of reverse racialism. There was intense competition between the organisations over who was the true inheritor of the tradition of african nationalism. Scarce resources were used up in bitter faction fighting. The close relations which the PAC formed with white members of the Liberal Party like Patrick Duncan, as well as the relations which FOFATUSA formed with SATUC and the ICFTU, bore further witness to the incoherence of PAC's alternative to Congress. It was not simply the case that the PAC was right-wing and racist, as Congress critics repeatedly affirmed, but rather that the rational core of the PAC's critique of the united front policy of Congress was converted into a cult of african leadership and the rational core of its critique of stalinism was converted into cold war anti-communism. It is an interesting footnote

that the major ideological influence on the PAC, George Padmore, was originally a leading stalinist in Moscow who broke from his old master exclusively on the question of african nationalism without developing any further critique (27).

The Non-European Unity Movement

Among coloureds and some africans in the Cape opposition to Congress was centered around the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM). Since we left the NEUM in our account of the 1940s, it had in the course of the 1950s increasingly marginalised itself as a political force by its own sectarianism. The original policy of non-collaborationism put forward by Tabata became an ever-more sterile principle applied as much to mass struggles themselves as to the disappearing institutions of 'non-european' representation. The turning point had come in 1948 when the Unity Movement led the opposition to the introduction of apartheid on the trains through a body called the Train Apartheid Resistance Committee. The committee, containing members both of the CPSA and the Anti-CAD, decided that the only way to defeat the new legislation was through mass boarding of the trains by volunteers. 450 volunteers enrolled but the Anti-CAD endlessly postponed the action claiming that the minimum number of volunteers was not enough to make it a success. Even when there was a spontaneous demonstration and boarding of trains, the Anti-CAD refused to support it and by all accounts the campaign ended in dismal failure (28).

The lesson drawn by the Unity Movement was not to prepare itself for mass action in the future but rather to justify its own abstentionism. It repudiated any campaign which it saw as 'sectional' or 'partial', that is, which did not attack the fundamentals of apartheid, and accordingly turned its back on all the major political initiatives of the 1950s. It rejected

all further offers by other political bodies to form a united front to fight apartheid on the grounds that they were the 'unprincipled stunts' of opportunists. Instead the Unity Movement offered a blanket indictment of all the protest strikes, days of mourning, anti-pass campaigns and the like for the 'unedifying childishness of these sporadic displays'. In several instances it actively opposed such campaigns, declaring that it had no time to lead people in their day to day demands and spurned struggle on smaller issues. Tabata argued that while he sympathised 'with each and every protest against the pass laws... we consider that all this energy and activity should be co-ordinated into one political field and not dissipated in sporadic outbursts'.

To no avail did left critics like Zayed Gamiet argue that 'if political conditions force collaborators or reformists to put up some show of fighting repressive measures, surely there can be no better way of exposing their bluff than by entering into a practical agreement with them on the basis of defined tasks without conceding one iota to their politics... Unless the people are constantly led on smaller questions, in struggles for "petty reforms", their confidence and support will not be won in the struggle to realise our major political demands' (29). Gamiet was particularly angered by the NEUM's refusal to participate in the May Day strike of 1950:

'to whip up hysteria against striking, to terrify workers with threats of reprisals and dismissals, to call upon the people not to strike but to blackleg, is the work of the ruling class agent... We were treated to the degrading spectacle of prominent

Unity Movement leaders using all their power and influence... in attempting to break the May 7 protest... To refuse to take strike action until 100% victory will be absolutely guaranteed is to postpone political action to judgement day'. (30)

There had been 'adventurist campaigns' but as Baruch Hirson noted under the pen name of R Mettler 'having called for co-ordinated struggles we wait eagerly for the NEUM to tell us how and where to struggle... Nowhere in his book does Tabata mention a directive for a campaign sent out by the NEUM... Only non-collaboration with oppressors' (31). Another left critic, Peter Dreyer, observed that 'a central thesis of Anti-CADism is that you don't fight for anything except everything - and therefore nothing' (32). Or as the NEUM itself put it, 'it is of no avail to fight specific issues as they crop up without relating these to the general struggle to liquidate Herrenvolkism as a whole'. Only when apartheid was completely victorious, so it seemed, would the 'Herrenvolk' become completely rotten and the Non-Europeans completely united. The pre-condition for complete victory was complete defeat.

The Unity Movement refusal to have any dealings with Congress was justified by the charge that Congress was a segregationist organisation defined according to race. The federal structure of the Unity Movement, however, was equally based on racial definitions and the NEUM's programmatic depiction of the enemy as the 'herrenvolk' posed the struggle in strictly racial terms. For all its non-collaborationism the Unity Movement accepted what Gamiel called 'the Herrenvolk reactionary divisions' (33). To the charge that what was needed was a unitary non-racial organisation based on

individual membership, Tabata could only reply that individual membership was wrong because 'individualism is the essence of the capitalist system'. The editor of *The Citizen*, Kenneth Hendrickse, caught well the racial content of Non-Europeanism when he argued that 'in the fight against "racial" division and discrimination, we cannot proceed... on the basis of the kraaling off of the nation into "European" and "Non-European" camps... Today this idea has become absolutely reactionary' (34). Peter Dreyer made a similar observation that Non-Europeanism was akin to Multi-Racialism and to Africanism in that they were all 'pre-democratic, neanderthal forms, explicable only in terms of South African cultural backwardness... To the Non-European mind, long confirmed in the acceptance of these (racial) categories as real and actual scientific divisions of society and not as an artifice of class exploitation... they have political validity... Non-Europeanism is essentially the result of the same historical anomaly that threw up "white" racism' (35).

The NEUM like Congress self-consciously subordinated class to nation, declaring that 'the place of the workers is first of all in the national movement for liberation' and that 'his first duty is to his people and to himself as part of the people'. The NEUM was even less oriented to the working class than Congress. It put off trade union organisation till the 'second stage' of the liberation struggle, since 'only the achievement of the Ten Point Programme can result in the growth... of a healthy, free and vigorous trade union movement... Present legislation is such that the trade unions could not hope to fulfil their mission... They are compelled to get to workers through our national organisation' (36). The Unity Movement's

indifference to working class struggles was coupled with a sectarian refusal to ally with Congress on any terms. Baruch Hirson's comment that there was 'no excuse' for the Unity Movement's separation from the Congress movement, since 'the existence of two movements, based on the same class, with similar programmes, has no justification' (37), was appropriate.

Even on foreign policy the NEUM could offer no alternative to the pro-Soviet line of the Communists. For instance, in 1956 *Torch* anticipated the Communists in offering its full support for the Russian intervention in Hungary and the suppression of the workers' revolt. When *New Age* in 1956 defended the judicial murder of Imre Nagy and quoted 'the great English jurist', Pritt as saying that 'the Hungarian revolution was a carefully organised attempt to restore a fascist regime', and in 1957 commended G~~omulka~~ for suppressing student dissent and the tramwaymen's strike in Poland, the Unity Movement fully concurred (38).

Such briefly was the state in which the Unity Movement entered the political crisis of 1958. True to form it characterised the election strike as a 'costly and criminal stunt', asking: 'are the policy makers of Congress really so stupid that they do not know that one of the best ways of helping to get the Nats back in... is for the so-called Congress movement to shout and stunt... in order to get the white electorate to vote UP?' (39). In the course of the election strike, however, they were provided with an issue that might have led to a recovery of their fortunes. SACPO, the coloured wing of Congress, reversed a prior decision to boycott

the election of a coloured representative, who according to the terms of the Separate Representation of Voters Act of 1956 had to be white but was to be elected by coloureds on a separate roll. Its decision to support Piet Beylerveld, a Communist member of CDD, led to bitter allegations of rigging and the resignation of five executive members, including the President George Peake. They signed a statement saying that they believed that 'participation in the mock elections would only disillusion and confuse our people' and that the decision to participate 'deliberately undermined' the decision of an official SACPO conference on the basis of a further 'conference' in which only 14 people were present and those favouring a boycott were deliberately excluded. Whatever the truth of these charges, the resigning members of the executive said that they were thinking of forming a new organisation, '... more in accord with progressive Coloured thought'. For the NEUM this was a golden opportunity. They led the boycott campaign against the election and claimed a major defeat for SACPO. Of the 19,138 coloured voters registered on the coloured roll under 20% voted and Beylerveld only received a bare 813 votes against 2138 for the more conservative opposition candidate, Abe Bloomberg (40).

Mandela was among those who supported standing a candidate in this election. He argued that it was a serious mistake to regard the boycott as a matter of principle which must be applied invariably at all times. It was rather a tactical weapon. Attacking what he saw as the projection of a tactic into an inflexible and overriding principle, he wrote

There is also the failure to draw the vital distinction between participation in such elections by the people who accept racial

discrimination... and participation in such elections... in order to exploit them in the interests of the liberatory struggle... The decision of SACPO... is correct. The most urgent task facing the Congress movement today is the defeat of the Nationalist government and its replacement by a less reactionary one... The defeat of the Nationalists would at least lighten the heavy burden... The parliamentary forum must be exploited to put forth the case for a democratic and progressive South Africa... Through parliament we can reach the masses of the people. (41)

Mandela offered an important critique of what we might call the fetish of boycott. The practical question, though, was whether Mandela was right to oppose the boycott in this particular instance. His view that the replacement of the Nationalists by the United Party was the most urgent task facing the liberation movement offered a set of priorities many steps removed from that of working class organisation. The electoral method adopted to achieve this end, predicated on the containment of extra-parliamentary action, had little realistic hope of success. The weakness of the electoral strategy in this specific case fuelled the fire of 'non-collaborationism' generally, strengthening what had been a minority view that any participation in the institutions of the racist state was illegitimate. It was a misfortune for the left in South Africa that this helped to prepare the ground for the mainstream of the liberation movement to assimilate the NEUM's fetish of non-collaborationism and lose sight of the formal validity of Mandela's critique (42).

The NEUM itself was unable to exploit its advantage. Instead, at a time of intensifying class struggle it devoted its energies to a split within its own ranks marked by the defection of the AAC. At one level the split was based on a racial division between the africans and coloureds, a symptom of the inability of the NEUM to integrate into a single movement its different national components. At another level the split was over personalities, with the luminaries of the movement - Jaffe, Vutela, Kies and Tabata - fighting for leadership. The main doctrinal ground of the split was over the interpretation of the Ten Point Programme. The argument centered around point 7, the clause calling for 'the redivision of the land'. There was a negative agreement that this meant the abolition of the Land Acts and an end to all forms of 'serfdom' or forced labour, but the question which divided the Unity Movement was how to redivide the land and what arrangements were to be instituted once the land was redivided.

The AAC affirmed the rights of private property: 'we demand merely the removal of the restrictions on the right to buy and sell land'. It argued for 'lawful acquisition within the framework of capitalist society', espousing a doctrine of rugged individualism, 'kulakisation' and the development of a capitalist class of african farmers. Their appeal was directed at the small-holders in the reserves and not at the 2,3 millions who lived and worked on white farms. The peasant was in their view the man of the future, based on a free economy and the crystallisation of a new agricultural bourgeoisie and proletariat. There were to be no fetters on the exclusive and absolute right to private property. As *The Soyán* put it, 'the Ten Point Programme visualises only bourgeois democracy and nothing

aise' (43). The Anti-CAD denounced the AAC: 'could there be a greater betrayal of the millions of landless peasants?' In its eyes the AAC's land programme mirrored the model of Ghana where 'the comprador class accepted the foreign imperialist masters and adapted itself to the role of helping in the exploitation of its own people in exchange for a share in this exploitation'. Anti-CAD demanded instead an 'equitable distribution' of the land in which ownership would be nationalised and occupation granted to individual peasants with an average holding of about 100 morgen each. This Rousseauesque dream was based on the division of white-owned land among millions of african peasants and the return to the land of millions who had entered the cities as wage labourers.

While Rome burned, these two wings of the NEUM fiddled with their opposing doctrines, subjected at the time to a fine marxist critique by Kenny Jordaan (44). In practical terms, the conservative AAC was more militant in its determination to release private property from the restrictions of race and status and prepared to participate in the rural unrest beginning to rock the Transkei (45). The radical Anti-CAD became more abstentionist. Perhaps the reason was that given by Peter Dreyer when he commented in his article on 'the Death Agony of Non-Europeanism' that it was under the banner of Non-European unity that coloured teachers conducted their struggles for higher wages and better conditions, but it was only with the gradual 'perfection' of apartheid that they could 'realise themselves dominating coloured locations, schools and universities' (46). Without roots in the working class movement, Dreyer argued that the AAC were at once more militant and more open about the petty bourgeois nature of their

right: the Anti-CAD sheltered behind socialism and the denunciation of quislings, the more it sought to establish its own status in apartheid society. With these divisions tearing it apart the NEUM was in no position to provide any rational solutions to the political crisis facing the liberation movement.

Mary Simons reached a similar conclusion about the 'sterility' of the teacher leadership of the Anti-CAD, arguing that their dependence on a monthly salary meant that 'they could either support the government or express their political frustration in militant language and political inaction'. Anti-CAD was the political expression of those who would 'give vent to their political resentment and frustrations... and abstain from positive action and confrontation with the authorities'. On the trotskysant political wing, Neville Alexander has argued that the teachers, lawyers, doctors and students who were the activists of the Unity Movement were a petty bourgeoisie eager not to jeopardise their property but at the same time to improve their standing and credentials. For them

The boycott could become in a violently repressive society such as apartheid... the ideal disguise for political abstentionism and more revolutionary-than-thouism... The class interests of the NEUM made the latter formulate a position of almost total paralysis... Non-collaboration became... the anti-septic 'negative' boycott of one government institution after another, a kind of conditioned reflex whereby one maintains one's political purity... There were no short-term gains in the struggle because the so-called ad hoc struggles were boycotted and sneered at in

the most superciliously pontifical manner,... The perfect moment (for a general strike or an armed insurrection) never turned up' (47).

The justification of non-collaborationism as a path toward the general strike and a violent assault on state power, was little more than an abstraction remote from any practical or theoretical significance.

The most promising aspect of the Unity Movement lay in the acute writings of the socialists who broke from its ranks in the 1950s, as the criticisms of Hirson, Dreyer, Gamiet and Jordaan point to. The NEUM itself played a destructive role both in disorienting the left and in leading the mainstreams of the liberation movement down the cul-de-sac of non-collaborationism. The origins of this self-serving abstentionism were to be found less in their middle class status than in the degeneration of a trotskyite political tradition which subsumed class working politics to a species of third world nationalism.

The non-racialists

The third wing of what might loosely be called the left opposition was composed of those who sought to construct a more consistently democratic critique of Congress on non-racial, class lines. From outside the Congress movement the editor of *The Citizen*, Kenneth Hendrickse, had made the attack on the multi-racialism of the Congress into his *cause celebre* since 1956. He saw multi-racialism as a mirror of apartheid, reflecting its racial categories and divisions. After 1958 he wrote with increasing frustration on the deficiencies of Congress:

Racial separation or social segregation is practiced in Congress. It is unquestionable that this practice is a voluntary and positive implementation of the institution of social segregation... It is in diametrical opposition to the abolition of the colour bar. (48)

Hendrickse made some headway in constructing a non-racialist perspective, but his own alternative was rooted in yet another form of racialism. His critique of the Communist Party degenerated into a virulent anti-semitism, when he attributed the multi-racial perspective of Congress to jewish influence in the Congress of Democrats. With his essay on '*The Essence of Multi-Racialism*' sub-titled as '*An Analysis of the Role of Jewish Consciousness in South African "Leftist" Politics*', he claimed that 'horror of anti-semitism... is the screen behind which the jewish consciousness shelters to escape the obligation of transforming itself from a sectional or caste consciousness into a genuine non-racial, South African democratic

consciousness' and that 'the genuinely independent theoreticians... of multi-racialism will be found... only and exclusively in the 'white' component - the CDD - which is overwhelmingly 'jewish' in composition' (49). Frustrated in his efforts to combat segregationist consciousness within the liberation movement, Hendrickse resorted to an irrational and racist explanation of resistance to his ideas.

Hendrickse's critique of ethnic communalism was channelled into a commitment to a 'South African national consciousness' or 'patriotism' which postulated 'the unity of the South African nation economically, culturally, politically'. 'One South Africa, one nation' was his watchword. He argued that since 'there has been an irreversible process of integration under Apartheid... democratic organs of struggle must be conceived in the spirit of a modern South African patriotism'. He opposed pan-Africanism and other kinds of internationalism on the ground that 'the subjective prerequisite for the development of socialist consciousness is the highest national patriotism'. Hendrickse's patriotic idealism was one way of seeking to overcome communal divisions but it did not answer why it was necessary or indeed how it was possible to build a new form of nationalism in order to overcome ethnic divisions. With increasing frustration Hendrickse banged his head against the wall of multi-racialism without thinking through its material basis. It had nothing to do with a lack of patriotism nor with jewishness but with the political weakness of the working class. For Hendrickse, putting the cart before the horse, the idea of a non-racial South African patriotism, sabotaged only by the sectional consciousness of jews, substituted for class politics.

A far more consistent non-racial critique of the multi-racialism of Congress came from socialists within the ranks of the Congress Alliance and particularly in the Congress of Democrats. Soon after the election campaign a letter was published in *Counter-Attack*, the bulletin of COD, calling for a single non-racial congress rather than the four national congresses of the Congress Alliance. The editorial of *Counter-Attack* recognised that the letter expressed a 'common feeling' but defended the principle of the four congresses (50). In the debate which ensued, the terms 'multi-racial' and 'non-racial' were confused but their meanings were clear. The substantive issue was whether to organise the liberation movement around four nationally-defined congresses or one non-racial congress. COD's defence of the former hung on a distinction between the non-racialism of the leadership and the race-consciousness of the masses. It wrote:

Every Congress leader of today would be willing - even eager - to belong to and join a multi-racial Congress... But are the masses ready for a multi-racial Congress? No... The mass following of the Congresses today indicates that this separation works in gathering the masses for political struggle... The example of the multi-racial Liberal Party shows that this form of organisation appeals only to the intellectual and leaves the masses outside its ranks.

COD saw it as natural in the light of South African conditions that this should be so:

Africans have special problems as Africans... Likewise each

other section of the population... From this arises the feeling that this organisation is ours... In any multi-racial organisation we (in COD) will always be a somewhat alien minority... Dare we ignore the ingrained prejudices of whites and make the barrier yet higher by demanding that they not only seek and strive for the multi-racial future but also join against all their background and traditions a multi-racial organisation... Our aim is not to turn white South Africans into negrophiles but into people who dedicate their lives to their own cause, to the cause of Europeans in South Africa.

In response to further criticisms and resolutions, a special supplement of *Counter-Attack* was issued in 1960 in defence of the multi-racial organisation of the Congress Alliance. COD argued that the decision to form four congresses was taken in 1953 at the suggestion of the ANC and that the africans' wish for their own national organisation should be respected: 'an oppressed national group has the right and duty to form its own shield'. Further, they said that it was necessary to relate to the popular fears of white people so that 'an organised body of white democrats can serve as a bridge over the colour bar and concentrate on winning white support; a specialised task in itself... Why should there be a clamour for one Congress when there is so much work to be done among the whites? Is this not indirectly writing off the whites as a political force?'

COD believed that it was necessary to relate to the backwardness of the mass of ordinary africans, since 'many Africans not yet politically

sophisticated would have reservations about joining a political organisations that could appear to them to be led by Europeans or Indians and not obviously their own' (51). CDD agreed that it would 'like to see the day when multi-racial organisation in all fields of life is capable of uniting all South Africans', but thought that 'that stage has not yet been reached' and would not be until such time as 'all the old prejudices of race against race' were first broken down; 'All the deep ingrained feelings of inferiority and superiority will first have to be wiped away... All the residential and group area bars to real multi-racial living will have to disappear. Until that time, multi-racial organisations at best will be capable only of organising the most advanced of all races - not the masses'. The same point was echoed in *Liberation* when it asked rhetorically 'what could be more natural than that at least in the ANC members wish to make certain that this is truly their organisation?' (52)

The claim that the masses were not ready for one non-racial congress was challenged by the socialist critics of multi-racialism. One such critic, Vic Goldberg (53), argued that on the only occasion in recent years when the question of a single non-racial Congress had been put to the masses, 'the answer has been a resounding yes'. He was referring, he said, to the response Ronnie Segal received at an Anti-Pass Conference where there were a thousand delegates representing 20 to 25,000 people. Goldberg argued that the failure of the Liberal Party to win the support of workers was not due to its non-racialism but 'because their interests are basically inimical to those of the masses'. We should add that the

major working class organisation in Congress, the South African Congress of Trade Unions, was its only fully non-racial component. If the mass of workers voted for one organisation across racial categories in their economic life, why not in their political life?

The nub of the issue for the non-racialists was whether the fight for a non-racial society could be achieved through a racially defined organisation. Goldberg argued that this was an internal contradiction in the leadership of the liberation movement which had to be superseded. It was not enough to wait for old prejudices to be overcome; the political organisations had to take a lead:

The Freedom Charter insists that our aim is the creation of a common society. Can we realise such a society from battle positions which are interlocked at the highest level, but not at the rank and file level... Have the different sections different problems? Is not our common problem the abolition of oppression, the creation of a new South Africa in which the people shall govern? Are we organisationally stronger in four organisations than in one? Are we not splitting and duplicating our forces in separate organisations with parallel committees that only meet at the top... (54)

The key points were these. First, the evidence that multi-racialism responded to the prejudices of the masses was less substantial than the evidence that it responded to the prejudices of the leaders. Second, whatever the prejudices of the masses, the liberation movement should seek to overcome them in their own body rather than tail them. Third, a

consistent democracy could not be built by replicating the racial categories of apartheid in the body of the liberation movement. And finally, the quadruplication of organisations was debilitating for the movement. It was a powerful case.

The campaign in COD for a single non-racial Congress was also a campaign for a more socialist direction for the movement as a whole. The two issues were intimately connected. The COD leadership explicitly rejected working class politics in the name of a broad, national movement, arguing that COD was not a political party but 'a loose association of like-minded people, bound together by a common belief in a democratic society', comprising within its ranks diverse political allegiances. It rejected the view that its ideology could be strengthened by socialist ideas as ill-founded since 'it results from attempts to turn COD from what it is - a loose association - into what it is not, a political party... COD as a body should not and does not take sides for or against socialism' (55). The exclusion of socialist ideas was justified by COD precisely in the name of not taking sides, its formal commitment to 'multi-class' politics representing in substance the denial of socialist politics. Thus from the premise that the working class was not the only class afflicted by discrimination, COD drew the conclusion that it would be 'politically incorrect for Congress to concentrate on "working class politics" in their propaganda toward white workers' and argued that 'the Labour Party and the trade unions exist to do such work'. To introduce socialist politics was 'to skip the historic stage of full democracy in South Africa' (56).

To socialists seeking to appeal more to the class issues facing white workers, COD's answer was that this 'might antagonise a large section of potential supporters who are anti-Nationalist and yet have little sympathy for the economic worries of white workers' and that the racism of white workers meant that they were 'one of the last sections to be won over'. When the left in COD also wanted to reach out to african workers, to help propagate socialist ideas and assist in their organisation, this too was ruled out by the COD leadership. Even when it was suggested that COD members should take advantage of their access to domestic servants to organise african women in the anti-pass campaign, Mary Turok advised COD members not to seek a way out of the 'at times frustrating, slogging work among Europeans', reminding them of the 'good reason' why Congresses are organised along racial lines: 'suspicion of Europeans among many Africans'. (57)

COD acted decisively to repel a working class perspective, interpreting the economic clauses of the Freedom Charter to exclude any socialist implication. At the same time, it celebrated the Soviet state as the embodiment of socialism, assuring its readers that 'we can point to a living example of the theory and practice of socialism... the USSR'. Even the Moscow Trials, it said, the purges of generals which shocked the world in 1936 and 1937, were 'methods of ridding the country of Fifth Columnists' (58). There were critics of COD who thought that its celebration of state despotism in the Soviet Union was reflected in less violent form in its attitude to dissent in South Africa. One anonymous writer commented that 'those making suggestions fall under a cloud of

suspicion... They are characterised as "sectarian" and, heresy of heresies, even "factionalism" is hinted at. COD has a policy and a programme: if you disagree with it, then get out and form your own organisation' (59). This view was echoed by Joe Nkomo, who was a leading member of the Liberal Party and a former Africanist within the ANC. He claimed that

The Coddite papers are trying to discredit all those in the ANC opposed to their policies... as Africanists, racialists, enemies of the people and government agents... Many people in the ANC opposed to their baaskap are democrats and like myself even socialists... The editorial (of Counter-Attack) has the cheek to demand that the ANC should no longer tolerate within it groupings with different points of view who canvass support for themselves... We must completely reject the view that there must be special organisations of the various so-called racial groups... The ANC should reject all racial labels... All those who accept the Freedom Charter should join the ANC' (60).

In the face of strong opposition from within Congress and the opposition of PAC and the Unity Movement outside Congress, it was no easy matter for the non-racial marxist left to make political headway.

Over and above the external difficulties facing the marxist left, their own idea of 'working class leadership' remained largely an abstraction. The tendency of the trotskyists in particular was to identify stalinism with what we have called its 'right turns', embodied in two-stage theory and popular frontism, forgetting that it had a left face as well. The

trotskyists had a far more developed critique of stalinism than the likes of Padmore or Tabata, the PAC or the Unity Movement; yet they too had difficulties in transcending its boundaries. Reacting against what they misread as the specific characteristic of the Communist Party, the subordination of working class independence to broad alliances of a popular front kind, the trotskyists were prone to mirror or even anticipate the left turns of the Communist Party. This was precisely what transpired in the tumultuous years to come, when the Communist Party turned sharply to the left and the trotskyists and the stalinists went down separate but parallel paths of armed struggle.

The Communist Party re-surfaces

As the crisis of the old political leadership deepened and the search for new methods grew more urgent, the limitations of Congress as a broad-based national movement without a well developed theoretical practice or ideological focus, came to the fore. The strength of Congress lay in uniting people on a minimum basis rather than acting as their political memory or theoretical vanguard. To map out a new course for the movement, what was needed was a more coherent form of political organisation. The Communist Party - with its international connections, theoretical armoury and centralist organisation - sought to fulfil this role. In 1959-60 it turned sharply to the left, re-surfacing as an independent political entity after almost a decade of subterranean life, having changed its name to the SACP. It revealed that it had been re-formed as a party as far back as 1953 and had functioned for the rest of the 1950s as an organised political group. The charge which critics for years had laid at the Communists and which for years had been denied, that they were operating as a secret party concealed behind the public stage of Congress, was now conceded but turned into a virtue: the transcendence of legalism.

The first issue of *African Communist* appeared in October 1959 and a leaflet in 1960 announced the re-emergence of the party in South Africa. The Communist Party re-asserted its independence in Congress. It now disavowed the old 'united front' tactics of Congress, which it had done so much to foster, as a form of legalism explicable in terms of the christian-pacifism

of the ANC leadership but inappropriate in the revolutionary situation said to be confronting South Africa. It now gave prominence to socialist goals and the leading role of the working class in the national democratic revolution. Thus the 1959 *African Communist* wrote of 'the liberating spirit of Communism' in Africa and of the proletariat as 'the most advanced class', since it alone 'would fight to the end against imperialism' while the middle classes 'would like to compromise and accept minor concessions which will leave the masses little better off'. The united front policy was redefined to stress that while it was important to 'unite all classes in a common struggle against imperialism', it was also necessary that the united front be 'led by the working class' and that workers be organised not only in their own trade unions but also politically 'in their own political party' (61).

In 1960 the party argued that the winning of political independence was only the 'first phase' and that 'the revolution must continue to wipe out all remnants of colonialism', including economic backwardness, in order to attain 'complete independence'. The Communist Party now prided itself on being a 'non-racial organisation, the first in this country to admit all men and women regardless of race or colour on the basis of complete equality'. It nailed its banner firmly to socialism in South Africa, a society where 'all the industries, farms, mines and other means of production are made public property... and progress is planned by a strong workers' and peasants' government' (62). Turning its back without explanation on the political role it itself had played since 1952-53, the Communist Party now sought to steal the thunder of the left. The weakness

of the non-Communist left opposition made possible this latest of the party's transmutations.

It was only at a later date, in its 1962 programme called '*The Road to South African Freedom*' (63), that the SACP spelt out the new 'revolutionary' direction it had taken. Apartheid was analysed as a 'special form of colonialism' designed to enforce 'the maximum exploitation of labour' on behalf of the 'monopolists' who are 'the real power in South Africa'. The state was characterised as moving 'towards the pattern of fascism; an open, terrorist dictatorship' in which 'almost every legal channel is closed'. The SACP called for 'a national democratic revolution to destroy white domination, the main content of which will be the national liberation of the African people', but would include 'breaking the power of monopoly capitalism' in South Africa and forging links with the Soviet Union. It asserted that 'formal independence alone will not ensure the genuine independence of the African people' since 'the former colonies remain tied by a thousand bonds to their former owners'. What was also required was a 'non-capitalist' form of development linked to the Soviet Union. The choice to be made was between 'capitalist and socialist paths'.

'National democracy' was no longer simply one person, one vote in a unitary South Africa, as it had been at the time of the Freedom Charter. Nor was it any longer a gradualist electoral strategy of voting out the Nationalists and bringing into power the United Party as part of a strategy of democratisation, as it had been during the election campaign. It now re-

defined in left terms as a transitional stage from capitalism to socialism. In accordance with 'the declaration of 81 Marxist Parties in December 1960', 'national democracy' was defined as a state which 'consistently upholds its political and economic independence, fights against imperialism and its military blocs, against military bases on its territory; fights against colonialism and the penetration of imperialist capital; rejects dictatorial and despotic methods of government; ensures the people broad democratic rights and freedoms... and the opportunity of working for the enactment of agrarian reform and other domestic and social changes, and for participation in shaping government policy'. Through its critique of 'neo-colonialism' and a defence of the 'non-capitalist road', the SACP's change of line in South Africa echoed a wider shift in Soviet foreign policy toward african nationalism more generally. As the Soviet Union began more aggressively to woo newly independent African states and African nationalist movements, it dubbed those with which it had friendly relations as 'non-capitalist' and 'national democratic'.

For the SACP it meant a definite adjustment in its relation to the ANC. Its programme re-iterated that 'there are no acute or antagonistic class divisions at present among the African people', but at the same time affirmed that 'the working class alone is capable of leading a victorious struggle'. While the ANC was said to represent all the classes which made up african society in South Africa and to have rejected 'narrow nationalism', the immediate task of the Communist Party was to 'lead the fight for national liberation' on behalf of the working class. The language of working class leadership replaced that of broad alliances. We shall see

in the following chapters how the SACP interpreted the substance of 'working class leadership' in the tumultuous class struggles which rocked South Africa in the Sharpeville period and their aftermath.

Ch. 11

The Mass Strike

Trade unions and nationalism

After the failure of the election strike the balance of forces within SACTU shifted toward a greater reliance on Congress as industrial action subsided and repression increased. Luckhardt and Wall have commented that the effect of the election campaign was in their view 'very encouraging' inasmuch as it proved to be an 'impetus for building a much stronger relationship' between SACTU and the ANC (1). According to their account, this closer working relationship was 'based on the importance of organising the working class in the struggle for liberation' (2). The new relationship reflected a resolution passed at the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), the 'eastern-bloc' federation to which SACTU was affiliated, declaring that 'workers and trade unions in dependent and colonial countries are asked to bind their trade union movement closely to the national liberation movements' (3). It also reflected the defeat of an independent working class perspective in SACTU in 1958.

The political support given by Congress to SACTU certainly had a constructive side as far as trade union organisation was concerned. Lutuli appreciated the importance of a strong trade union movement, coining the expression 'SACTU is the spear and the ANC the shield', and

his call to workers after the election campaign to join trade unions led to an inflow of new members into SACTU. The capacity of Congress to organise boycotts of goods from companies where workers were on strike or particularly badly exploited, as in the potato boycott of 1959, indicated the practical utility of political leadership for trade unions. The stronger relationship between SACTU and Congress, however, also signified the integration of SACTU as the workers' wing of Congress at the expense of its trade union functions and the diminution of the influence of SACTU as a bearer of working class politics in Congress.

The introduction of factory committees in SACTU was heralded as a key instance of the new relationship between trade unionism and politics. They were said to have the advantage of combining political and economic functions and building up shop floor organisation in the unions. The factory committees were to comprise the politically 'most advanced' workers, their function to draw workers behind the national campaigns of Congress. The relationship of these committees to SACTU branches in the factories was ambiguous. In some cases they were set up directly by ANC members independently of existing trade union structures; according to Lambert, the 'seminal' document on the factory committees, written by Sisulu and Turok, was presented not to SACTU but to Congress (4). Encouragement was often given to the establishment of factory committees in the townships rather than the factories. By-passing the structures of authority and accountability in SACTU, the factory committees functioned to tie the trade unions to the political agenda of Congress. This

particular fusion of politics and economics represented a diffusion of trade union priorities,

Similar problems beset the formation of industrial area committees, designed to organise workers in their areas of work. Area teams would move to factories and shops during lunch hour, addressing workers on political and trade union matters. The idea was put forward by the National Consultative Committee (NCC) of Congress as part of its plan for industrial action in support of the demand for a national convention in 1960. The NCC set up its own action committees to implement the plan with the assistance of SACTU's Management Committee. At SACTU's national executive committee and conference, however, there was increasing disquiet over SACTU's lack of control over these initiatives and fear that SACTU would 'lose its identity' (5) as a trade union congress. 'What were required were doers, not additional planners', the minutes of one meeting said, and they did 'not need people to tell them what to do' (6).

Arguably the most illustrative example of what the new relationship between trade unionism and the national liberation movement meant was the £1 a day minimum wage campaign. It was originally put forward within the ranks of SACTU as a national demand for a statutory minimum wage, backed by industrial action and linked to the particular wage demands of the individual unions. After 1958 it was turned into a broad-front political campaign based on petitions and deputations to business and

governmental associations. It met with verbal sympathy from some sections of business but little practical response. A resolution passed at SACTU's 1959 conference declared that 'the £1 a day campaign ... has made its impact on South African economic life and that employers' associations have been forced to recognise the need for substantial wage increases'. It resolved 'to take advantage of this by sending deputations to employers' organisations' (7). The deputations fell on stony ground, however, as far as material benefits were concerned. A 1960 conference resolution called on SACTU to ask for further discussions with the Chambers of Industry, Commerce and Mines though it was reported that 'many members felt that no purpose would be served by simply re-iterating our demand' (8). In the confusion of failed petitions, the £1 a day slogan came to dominate the normal process of wage bargaining. At the 1960 SACTU conference, one official complained that 'it happened continually that individual unions affiliated to SACTU did not submit demands for £1 a day to their employers' associations' and cited the case of the African Laundry, Cleaning and Dyeing Workers which was asking for only £4 a week. According to the report, 'he felt this was contradictory and embarrassing. It was agreed to recommend to all unions that their wage demands should be £1 a day' (9). It was pointed out that in the case of some unions workers were already receiving above £1 a day. It was agreed that in these cases the demand for £1 a day for every day of the week, as opposed to every working day, should be advanced. At the 1961 conference there was more of the same. The 1962 conference agreed to draw up a draft minimum wage bill and send a delegation to the Minister of Labour, asking him to introduce legislation on the basis of the draft. SACTU wrote to the Progressive

MP, Helen Susman, to gain her support for this project and was told in reply that 'the parliamentary agenda for 1962 was crowded' and that another bill was going through parliament from the Progressives without consultation with SACTU for the recognition of trade unions (10). Nothing came of it. The 1963 SACTU conference repeated the same demand yet again without effect.

The demand for a statutory minimum wage originally put forward by SACTU was a means of generalising the particular struggles of organised labour and of extending the gains made by the most advanced workers to the less advanced. As the £1 a day campaign developed, however, wage demands on employers backed by industrial action and shop floor organisation became subsumed to a seemingly endless round of petitions to employers' associations and government bodies. Moses Mabhida caught part of the problem when he suggested that 'looking back I think we were flogging the wrong horse. We should have focused it against the employers, not the government that wouldn't change the wage structure' (11). The form of 'political unionism' espoused by SACTU, though presenting itself in very radical dress, represented in this respect a return to a kind of deputational politics based on petitioning employers and government. The official view that economic gains could not be won without prior political advance served as a discouragement to industrial action. One SACTU report put the matter thus: 'A workers' committee cannot get a rise in workers' wages all by itself. It will have to stand together with all other trade unions and workers' committees for £1 a day all-round increase in wages' (12). But standing together for an all-round

increase meant further deputations to business and government, Notwithstanding this policy there were industrial actions in 1959 which were certainly no less effective than the seemingly endless round of appeals to the liberal bourgeoisie.

There was discontent among some members of SACTU with the progress of the £1 a day campaign. An interesting letter addressed to the *Citizen* in the early days of the campaign was revealing of the problems to come:

This campaign is being launched in order to organise the workers - and this is unreal. To achieve £1 a day will require a fierce struggle by an organisation that is strong and firmly built. There will have to be an established movement with funds and trained organisers... It is farcical to campaign for organisation under the banner of this slogan... The workers will be organised under more specific slogans - in fact for demands that are far less than £1 a day. Only this slow work of patiently enrolling workers into trade unions on small demands will prepare them for a campaign such as SACTU proposes. Knowing the pitiable strength of SACTU, one can only fear that the campaign they propose will lead to frustration... SACTU's tasks are obvious. Organise the workers first and then campaign for £1 a day. You cannot reap when you have not sown. (13)

This letter indicates the gap between SACTU's national approach and the day-to-day priorities of trade union organisation. As political as a trade union may be, it has to satisfy some of the most immediate economic demands of the workers if it is to win their confidence. The

experience of the Textile Workers Industrial Union (TWIU) is instructive in this regard, Daniels, its secretary, wrote:

We affiliated to SACTU in the mid-'50s but with the government harassment and continued intimidation, the SACTU unions found themselves unable to deliver the short-term goods to their members. We quickly realised that we were faced with a choice; either keep to strict bread and butter politics like most of the other industrial unions which were winning some economic improvements for their members or to be involved in political issues which could tire our members and lead to demoralisation. By 1963 we had definitely chosen the latter. (14)

So it must have appeared; as a choice between effective trade unionism without politics or political commitment at the expense of effective trade unionism. In reality 'apolitical' trade unionism was to prove just as much a chimera as its 'political' counterpart. As long as the substance of the politics espoused by the liberation movement was treated as immutable, there was no apparent way out of this double bind.

SACTU did not simply neglect trade union issues but the tension between its trade union work and Congress politics grew stronger as SACTU nationally was drawn deeper into Congress-initiated campaigns. When a marked rise in membership occurred in the 1960-61 period in the wake of the new surge of working class resistance, many of the new members were placed in General Workers Unions (GWUs), intended to serve as temporary bodies directly under the control of SACTU's local committees, in which new members would stay until allocated to their respective industrial

unions. Some GWUs were able to perform effective industrial work, but several SACTU delegates questioned the wisdom of what they feared was a dilution of SACTU's commitment to industrial unionism and expressed their doubts about the supposedly temporary character of the GWUs. Only a small number of separate industrial unions were created from them, with a notable exception in Durban, but in most cases the major function of the GWU's organising work was less in connection with trade union organisation than with mass mobilisation for Congress campaigns,

The trade union movement held the key to the self-organisation of the working class as a whole and SACTU in particular was the only part of the liberation movement organised along non-racial, working class lines. The specific form of 'political unionism' which SACTU practiced, however, functioned paradoxically to weaken working class influence on the political level and independent trade unionism on the economic level (15). In the early 1960s, first with the mass strike after Sharpeville and then with the turn to armed struggle, the contradictions at the heart of this form of political unionism were soon to ripen.

Women fight back

For the women's movement the failure of the election strike, coupled with the calling off of the 'first phase' of the anti-pass campaign, led to the virtual dissolution of the women's anti-pass campaign as a national movement. This did not put an end to the militancy of african women on the ground but it did leave their struggles more fragmented and bereft of political leadership. The fierce resistance of women in Zululand, spreading in 1959 from Cato Manor, a shanty town bordering on Durban, to the countryside, was an important case in point.

The issue which triggered the explosion was the announcement of the government's intention to move people from Cato Manor to Kwa Mashu. Behind that lay the pass issue and the fury of women at the worsening threat of expulsion to the 'native reserves'. As one commentator observed,

Those whose marital status did not suit the authorities, those who were not married under strict Christian law, those old women who had come to look after grandchildren while their daughters worked, and those generally who did not find favour, were being 'endorsed out'... to the Reserves by the hundred. Any family life they were building up, any stable future they might have cherished, was smashed in the moment the official's pen endorsed them out of the area. (16)

The women's anger was directed at the state-run beer halls. Many women

survived on home-brewing so that when the government made it illegal and provided their own beerhalls instead, it became a matter of economic survival. Women stormed these beerhalls, sometimes assaulting men who patronised them in the face of their boycott, destroying the buildings or picketing premises to stop men entering. The authorities responded in strength. Cato Manor was described 'like a town under siege, dominated by armoured cars and armed men' (17). Women were beaten, gassed and shot. The official casualty figures of four africans killed and 24 wounded under-estimated the losses. In March 1961 18 persons were found guilty of killing nine policemen in the fighting. (18)

Observers at the time marvelled at the women's strength:

The heroines of the whole affair are undoubtedly the women, those magnificently built Zulu warriors of 1959. I stoppped for a time with about 300 of them while they picketed the Lamontville beerhall,.. Police, black and white, heavily armed, lined the road for about a hundred yards. The women, prancing about with their sticks, sang and jeered at the men - particularly the African police. The women looked determined, deeply angry; but traditional good spirits sparkled to the surface,.. They shook their fists at the few defiant youngsters who, with much swagger and bravado, thought they could get through the feminine picket lines to the beer. Within seconds the men scuttled, sheepish and filled with awe. (19)

The outstanding aspect of the women's demonstrations which one contemporary commentator identified was 'the coherence and certainty of

their battle; they knew whom they were fighting - Council and Government officials. This is quite different from the 1949 Cato Manor riots, when resentment and frustration burst out in passion against Indians' (20). The action was soon to be copied by women in many of the smaller towns in Natal and linked with issues of police harassment, passes and housing. The campaign was extended into the rural areas, where suffering was even greater because of constraints imposed by the Natal Code. The beerhall issue was linked to other grievances; the government's dipping tanks which women were forced to service free and which many believed were responsible for killing their cattle; the culling of cattle which by reducing stocks further undermined the economic base of women in the reserves; the Betterment Schemes which exacerbated land shortage and resulted for a number of women in loss of land rights; an increase in taxes in the rural areas and the intensification of influx controls which prevented them or their husbands from moving to Durban to earn money. Except in Harding, where men marched on the town to free women convicted of destruction of government property, the resisters were nearly all women. On many occasions demonstrations turned violent as women attacked government property, especially the beerhalls and dipping tanks, and burnt their passes. One eloquent demonstrator was reported to have given her version of a deputation to government, saying: 'in destroying a dipping tank, the people had written a letter which the Government would read'.

The potential present in these largely spontaneous campaigns could not be realised in the absence of more formal organisation. The ANC Women's

League had a branch in Cato Manor and the ANC's Freedom Day rally in Durban drew a large crowd of around 50,000 people. In the rural areas ANC women were involved in organising demonstrations and articulating grievances. The Congress leadership, however, urged restraint and non-violence. Its offer to go into Cato Manor to pacify the women was rejected by the authorities who falsely denounced the ANC as the instigators of the trouble. A statement by Lutuli condemning violence was distributed through Natal villages by volunteers. He paid tribute to the spirit of resistance shown by africans but warned the women that ;

We do not support anybody who damages or burns buildings or destroys property. It does not benefit the nation and it loses us support throughout the world, because violence makes us look like terrorists and irresponsible people. We also lose support from our sympathisers in the country and abroad. (21)

Drum reported that Lutuli sent out 250,000 leaflets through a network of volunteers and that 'his action has brought quiet for the present to the troubled province of Natal'. Leo Kuper, endorsing the ANC's non-violence, commented that 'peaceful development... may depend in large measure on the ability of Congress to canalise passion, under conditions of great hardship and provocation, into disciplined and effective non-violent political action' (22). The regional ANC and SACTU in Natal benefitted from the disturbances, experiencing in 1959 a marked revival of membership and organisation, but the question nationally was whether the ANC's role as a non-violent intermediary looking for support among 'sympathisers' at home and abroad would suffice to canalise the passions unleashed. Retrospectively Moses Mabhida commented on the Natal protests that 'perhaps the leadership of the ANC did not understand very well the

problems of the people... Unfortunately for our people, we didn't realise the extent of the organisation of the people which was at the time very high, and the women formed a very strong nucleus for a powerful organisation' (23).

A note on rural resistance

At the grass roots the anger of many black people was bubbling with a fury beyond the capacity of the united front approach of Congress to contain. In the country as well as the town there was evidence of growing revolt, but here a different story, one largely of political isolation rather than political dependency, may be told about the struggles of reservists. Coming in the wake of the rural revolts in Zeerust and Sekhukhune land in 1958 and the Natal reserves in 1959, mass resistance spread to the reservists of Pondoland, a rural area of the Transkei. Their battle was against Bantu Authorities, new taxes, cattle culling, forced resettlement and state repression (24). The Pondo revolt was the largest of the rural revolts resulting in the death by shooting of 30 Africans in June 1960.

Mandela had already observed in 1956 the lack of political organisation of Congress in the rural areas, realising that 'isolated and sporadic outbursts' would not be sharply felt by the regime. 'The problem of organisation in the countryside', he wrote, 'poses itself as one of major importance for the liberatory movement' (25). Moses Kotane had

written in 1954 that 'as yet the democratic movement for liberation has barely begun the task of arousing and mobilising the tremendous potential forces for progress among the landless millions in the countryside' (26). Govan Mbeki argued that it was not until the Pondo revolt that recognition of the potential of rural struggle was achieved by Congress. He wrote that 'the Pondo movement succeeded by example in accomplishing what discussion had failed to do in a generation - convincing the leadership of the importance of peasants in the reserves to the entire national struggle' (27). In spite of good intentions Congress had little relation to rural unrest except through the efforts of individuals like Govan Mbeki and Rowley Arenstein (28). It thus laid itself open to the kind of veiled criticism which appeared in *Spark* in December 1960, when it wrote:

We must see to it that no group fights alone. It is only if we carry on the fight in different places at the same time that we will be able to split the forces of the government... If the people of Zeerust, Sekhukhuneland, Pondoland and Zululand had risen together, we would today have been nearer the freedom we want... We will stand together, people of the town and country... The best way in which we can support the people of Pondoland now is to raise the struggle against Bantu Authorities in every corner of the land' (29).

The struggles against Bantu Authorities were not generalised in the way *Spark* hoped for. We shall return later to how Congress in fact sought to relate to rural unrest but it was the spontaneous action of urban workers which took the front of the political stage.

The Sharpeville Crisis

The ANC called 1959 its anti-pass year but weaknesses in the campaign allowed the Africanists in the PAC to take the initiative with their 'positive action' against the pass laws. No bail requested, no defence offered and no fines paid were the defiant watchwords of the action. Sobukwe declared that the campaign would be conducted in a spirit of absolute non-violence but would be the first step in the africans' bid for freedom by 1963. The campaign, which started on the 21 March 1960, was uneven in its effects but large crowds, including the PAC leaders Sobukwe and Leballo, presented themselves at police stations in Evaton, Vanderbijl Park, Sharpeville (near Vereeniging) and Langa in Cape Town to surrender their pass books and invite arrest. In Johannesburg some 130 africans, including Sobukwe and Leballo, were detained and in Vereeniging and Cape Town thousands of men stayed away from work. In the course of these events, the police fired on demonstrators at Sharpeville and Langa. At Sharpeville it is estimated that some 87 africans were killed and 227 wounded; at Langa a further 17 were killed and 46 wounded. For the government Dr Verwoerd explained these events as symptomatic of what was happening more generally on the African continent and as a product of political incitement. After a flood of criticism from home and abroad, including a statement from the U.S. State Department deploring the loss of life, the government appointed on the 23 March a judicial commission of inquiry.

For black people inside the country these massacres triggered a wave of mass protest; the 'days of crisis' or 'the nineteen days' as they were called. Tens of thousands of african workers went on strike in Capetown and on the 25 March Philip Kgosana, a PAC organiser, led a crowd of some 2000 africans to the Caledon Square police station without passes to offer themselves for arrest. When the police agreed not to arrest anyone in Cape Town for pass offences until the situation returned to normal, the crowd dispersed. On the 26 March the police throughout the country were instructed as a temporary concession not to arrest africans for failing to carry passes, a measure which the United Party leader in Natal, a Mr Mitchell, condemned as 'a shocking exhibition of complete weakness'. On the same day the Minister of Justice announced that he would proceed with legislation to ban the ANC and the PAC and Lutuli responded by ceremoniously burning his pass book. He declared with characteristic courage that he had 'no intention of ever carrying a reference book again', expressing the 'hope that all other Africans will voluntarily follow my example' (30)

The ANC responded to these outbreaks of militancy by proclaiming for the 28 March a National Day of Mourning when everybody throughout the country was invited to stay away from work and Lutuli called for 'a top level meeting of African leaders with the leaders of all political parties', lest there should occur 'a further deterioration in race relations' (31). He was reported as saying that one stay-at-home would not lead to success but that a series of them would force the government to negotiate or white society to get rid of the government. The PAC

decided to support the day of mourning. The stay-at-home was estimated to have been 95% successful among africans in Cape Town (though mainly ignored by coloureds), 85 to 90% successful in Johannesburg and Fort Elizabeth and 20% among africans in Durban (where most indian businesses also closed) (32). On the evening of the Day of Mourning there was rioting in the african townships to the south-west of Johannesburg and some african townships in the Cape residents set fire to schools and churches. Workers pursued the 'stay-at-home' far beyond the calls of their leaders. For more than a week after the day of mourning, nearly all of the 60,000 africans employed in Cape Town stayed away from work and large numbers of migrant workers were reported to have returned to the Transkei.

On the Day of Mourning parliament debated the Unlawful Organisations Bill, which the United Party agreed to support subject to annual review. The Minister of Justice described the actions of the two Congresses as bordering on revolution. 'What they want', he explained, 'is our country'. On the 29 March the government passed a state of emergency under the Public Safety Act and some 200-300 officials and members of the Congress Alliance, the PAC and the Liberal Party were arrested, some of whom were released temporarily after a writ of *habeas corpus* was served. On the 30 March, police entered the Langa township to eject workers from their homes to force them back to work. Workers reacted by marching 30,000 strong from Langa and Nyanga to the Caledon Square police station. The PAC leadership as well as the ANC was caught off guard by this largely spontaneous protest. Philip Kgosana, the secretary

of the Cape PAC, 'led' the march but admitted that he first heard of it whilst in bed and had to be given a lift by a reporter to get to the head of the procession, Kgosana asked for an interview with the Minister of Justice to secure the release of their leaders and the satisfaction of the PAC's immediate demands; abolition of the pass laws, a minimum wage of £35 a month and no victimisation, On receiving an assurance from the police chief that he would arrange an interview, Kgosana urged the people to return to the townships, which they did, Kgosana himself was not afforded a meeting with the Minister of Justice but was instead detained.

As the general strike continued in Cape Town, there were demonstrations, riots and pass-burnings in a number of other towns in the Western Cape (notably Simonstown, Paarl, Hermanus, Stellenbosch and Worcester) and in Worcester many coloureds joined the stay-away from work, In Natal there were stay-aways, demonstrations and serious riots in a number of townships, notably in Cato Manor where at least three africans were shot dead and 18 injured on the 1 April, Demonstrations and stay-aways continued until the 4th or 5th of April, In Johannesburg, however, there were only isolated and small demonstrations and no official strike lead from SACTU despite calls from the left to join the workers in the Cape and Natal (33), Facing brutal intimidation from the police and army and the arrest of 11,000 africans, the mass strike began to peter out in the week starting the 4 April, It had been organised and initiated largely from below and appears to have received little direction from either the Congress Alliance or the PAC beyond the original Day of Mourning, It was

only when the state had already recovered the initiative, when many of the Congress and PAC leaders were imprisoned, when workers were exhausted by the prolonged strike and the effects of brutal police assaults and in short when the tide of militancy had receded, that the ANC called for africans to stay away from work on the 19 April in protest against government repression, a call which the workers were by now incapable of meeting,

There was widespread feeling on the left that neither the ANC nor PAC found the means to lead the mass protest or to counter the degree of repression meted out by the state. One member of the Communist Party, Ben Turok, argued in retrospect that Congress failed to 'make the right break... we were so pre-occupied with the legal processes (of the Treason Trial) that we didn't have the right conception of revolution as opposed to pressure' (34). Many militants were beginning to conceive of the need to move from protest to challenge.

The ANC executive blamed the failure of the strike call on the 19 April on police terror and intimidation. Leading Congress militants, including the Communist Party, began to argue that the repressiveness of the state demanded a shift in strategy. This view was mirrored on the trotskyist left. Baruch Hirson, now writing on behalf of a small left group in Congress called the Socialist League of Africa, offered a compelling polemic against blaming the state exclusively for the defeats of the movement:

We are frankly tired of this excuse. It has been used now for the past few failures and is always produced after the event. Surely we have to be political simpletons not to take this into account in planning campaigns. (35)

Hirson argued that the strength of the state and its relative insulation from the effects of the withdrawal of labour demanded a new strategic approach from the movement beyond the limits of the tried and tested stay-at-home. He wrote:

We face a strong, arrogant and confident ruling class ... fortified by a state machine on which it can rely. Above all else it has an army, a police force and auxiliaries ... which it can rely on at all time. The present government and its supporters are also not immediately hit by the withdrawal of labour because they are not the direct owners of the mines, the factories or the large commercial houses. (36)

There was in short a growing discontent with the 'old methods' in all quarters: within the Communist Party, the left of the ANC and the left opposition. The question which faced the movement, however, was first what precisely were the faults in the old methods which needed to be remedied and second what alternatives were possible and desirable.

The workers' revolt revealed definite chinks in the armour of the apartheid state, beset by the products of its own irrationality. The authorities had shown indecision and a marked nervousness in the face of the mass strike and the economic crisis which triggered it. Capital in South Africa was distinctly jittery. In the fifteen months after

Sharpeville gold and foreign reserves dropped by R173m, to R142m., and the stock market and gold price plummeted. There was a capital outflow of R12m. per month in 1960 and the first half of 1961 as foreign investors lost their confidence (37). Within the ruling class, alternative strategies were debated with the reformist option once again on the agenda. In May 1960 P.O.Sauer, acting a Prime Minister in place of Dr. Verwoed (who was recovering from an attempt on his life) called for reform of the government's black policy in four areas: the application of the pass laws, the supply of liquor to africans, the level of wages and the political rights of urban blacks. According to Sauer, 'the old book of South African history was closed at Sharpeville a month ago and for the immediate future South Africa would reconsider openly and honestly its approaches to the National Question'. We must create a new spirit which will restore overseas faith, both white and non-white, in South Africa' (38).

The English-speaking press was more forthright in expressing its demands. An editorial in the *Star* warned that 'the overriding duty rests on the government to recognise that the use of the forces of the state to restore a respect for authority and law offers no solution to our human and race problems' (39). Five business associations (the Federated Chamber of Industries, the Associated Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Mines, the Afrikaanse Handelsinstitut and the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation of South Africa) presented a memorandum to the Prime Minister demanding major policy reforms, including changes in the qualification for permanent urban residence and amendments to trade

union legislation regarding black workers (40). The Chairman of the General Mining and Finance Corporation summed up a general feeling when he stated that 'when the policies of the politicians threaten the basic economy of the country... the leaders of industry have not only the right but also the duty to express their opinion and continue to do so until some change of policy is apparent' (41). There were weaknesses in the repressive apparatus of the state. The Defense Force operated essentially on the basis of equipment handed down from World War II and defence expenditure was not high by later standards. In 1958-59 it stood at 36 million rands, in 1959-60 at 40 million and in 1960-61 at 44 million. It was only in subsequent years that it escalated from 72 million in 1961-62 to 210 million in 1964-65 (42). There is evidence that in the immediate aftermath of Sharpeville, many country towns were denuded of police as re-inforcements were rushed to the major urban flashpoints (43).

The aftermath of Sharpeville presented the rulers of South Africa with substantial difficulties: an economic crisis that had been threatening before the Sharpeville period, a withdrawal of confidence from foreign investors, widespread international denunciation of apartheid (including the threat of economic sanctions and the virtual expulsion of South Africa from the Commonwealth), mass urban strikes and demonstrations inside the country and the outbreak of rural unrest particularly in Pondoland. The rulers themselves were undecided as to which path to tread; whether simply to pursue 'separate development' or adopt some form of concession toward urban blacks. As the Cape Nationalist

newspaper, *Die Burger*, wrote in an editorial in late March: 'Our legislation must give top priority to a re-consideration of the position of Natives in the cities with an open and realistic heart and a willingness to do what was necessary in our situation'. Notwithstanding their deficiencies, the 'old methods' shook the power of the state. What was needed was a way of consolidating and extending the gains.

Within the Congress leadership the dominant view was that the emergency revealed that the Nationalist government was in dire trouble, not knowing which way to turn, and that the broad democratic strategy of Congress was reaping its reward. Brian Bunting summed up this view when he wrote in 1961:

Afrikaner nationalism has reached the peak of its possible strength and is already declining. It has proved unable to win allies, apart from its paid servants, among any other section of the population. The English-speaking South Africans are more anathagonistic than ever before... On the other hand, African nationalism grows persistently in strength... The attitude of a large section of the public... has been drastically changed by a succession of government defeats - the forced departure from the Commonwealth, the series of anti-apartheid votes in the United Nations General Assembly, the collapse of the treason trial. It is obvious to all that Nationalist Afrikanerdom cannot long survive the combination of its internal and external enemies. The pressures for change ... are enormous and grow all the time. Nationalist isolation has never been so complete as now. The

mood of confidence among the non-whites is matched by the temper of uncertainty, helplessness and... sheer negation in Nationalist ranks... (44)

From this perspective it was precisely because the strategy of isolating the Nationalists was working that there was a need for a change in method to complete the rout. As Bunting put it, 'never since the Nationalist government came to power have conditions been more propitious for an all-out assault on the citadel of apartheid' (45). The view that there was a revolutionary crisis in South Africa, echoed by many of the leading representatives of Congress, was wishful thinking given the circumstances of the time. The mass strike had exhausted itself. It had not been extended into the industrial heartlands of the Rand, it had not linked up with the rural unrest and it had not translated itself into any form of dual power. It is an interesting footnote that while Hirson stressed the strength of the apartheid state and Bunting stressed its weakness, from these opposing starting points they both saw the need for the adoption of new methods.

At the initiative of Congress a further attempt was made to organise mass pressure on the government using the old methods. A conference of leaders from the Congress Alliance, the PAC and from other groups was called for December 1960. The PAC soon withdrew, claiming that such conferences achieved nothing but ANC domination and served only to place the african people under the spell of foreign elements and ideologies. The ANC went ahead with the conference anyway, which met on the 25th and 26th March 1961. The conference demanded that the government prepare a

national convention of elected representatives of all adult men and women on an equal basis irrespective of race, colour, creed or other limitation by 31 May 1961. It warned that failure by the government to comply would be met by massive demonstrations from the 29th to the 31st of May coinciding with the proclamation of South Africa as a republic. The likelihood that the government would comply was minuscule. Critics of the stay-away, particularly those in PAC who opposed and boycotted it, argued that one of its main shortcomings was that the Congress leadership chose to focus on an issue that was essentially to do with white politics and of little interest to black workers; namely the declaration of South Africa as a republic. The choice of Republic Day as the occasion to put forward the demand for universal suffrage and a democratic constitution, by serving to identify the Congress with anti-republicanism, brought to the ears of the PAC echoes of the ANC's old reliance on the British Empire to confront the Boers. Mandela sought to counter this impression, saying that the campaign 'did not mean that conference preferred a monarchy to a republican form of government' (46) and that the PAC's objections had more to do with factional rivalries than with political principle.

When the government and the opposition unsurprisingly failed to respond to the demands of Congress, it was decided on the 14th of April that the three day strike would take place with Mandela, working from underground, as its chief organiser. The state was forewarned and some 10,000 africans were arrested in advance of the stay-away, ostensibly for pass offences. The state passed a new law, the General Law Amendment

Act, allowing for the detention of persons for twelve days without bail. The stay-away began as planned, its actual effectiveness not easy to gauge. It was reported that it met with some success in Johannesburg (with 40-60% of the workforce on strike) and in Port Elizabeth and the Cape (with 30-40% on strike) but a poor response in most other centres. The immediate assessment of leading figures in Congress of the success of the stay-away was positive. A 'tremendous support for the strike call' was reported by SACTU (especially among clothing, textiles, canning, laundering and furniture workers) and a survey carried out by SACTU argued that:

Workers who are organised into trade unions are more responsive to a political call than unorganised workers. Their trade union activity has given them heightened political consciousness and they also respond more readily when the appeal is made on a factory as opposed to a residential basis as they feel that there is less chance of dismissal if the whole factory is involved. (47)

New Age acclaimed the strike as the most widespread on a national scale that the country had ever seen (48). Mandela wrote that 'industrial workers in the key centres once again answered the call for political action' and that 'the strike in Port Elizabeth was more widespread by far on the second day than on the first'. Noting 'the wide support the stay-away received from students of all races' and that 'the Nationalist government was severely shaken', Mandela concluded that 'this campaign remained an impressive demonstration of the strength of our organisation, of the high level of political consciousness attained by our people, and of their readiness to struggle against the most

intimidating odds'. He added that the coloureds in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth 'responded splendidly' in contrast to 1960, (49).

Nonetheless on the second day of the stay-away Mandela told the workers to return to work as 'the strike was not the national success I had hoped for'. He added ominously that 'this closes a chapter in our methods of political action' (50). With the banning of the ANC and PAC there was little organisation in the townships and the state response was thorough and severe. Mandela now attributed the strike's lack of success both to state repression and to errors committed by Congress. He singled out the appeals for non-violence put out by the leadership which 'could easily have been interpreted as instructions against picketing' and pointed to the weaknesses of 'organising a strike without picket lines'. Despite the repression and the errors, Mandela concluded that 'the strike was witness to the great political maturity of those struggling for their rights in South Africa' and that 'the people emerged more confident, unshaken by the prognoses that they had failed, that strikes could "no longer work"'. He added that the strike was further strengthened by 'the climate of world opinion' treating South Africa as an 'isolate'. The history of this event is very confusing. Why did Mandela both praise the response of workers and call off the strike after the first day saying that it had not been a success? why did he say that it represented 'a close to our methods of political action'? The answer is not at all clear. Mandela indicated that what he had in mind by new methods was not a turn to armed struggle but rather a mass

non-collaboration campaign in which refusal to pay taxes would occupy a central place.

Other commentators warned against the drawing of hasty conclusions from the alleged failure of the strike and in particular against any turn away from mass organisation to armed struggle. In a perceptive article on 'Techniques of Revolt' in *Africa South*, a 'special correspondent' argued against what he saw as the emerging view that the stay-at-home was a failure and that 'the disenfranchised cannot liberate themselves except by methods of individual terrorism, violent sabotage and eventual armed revolt'. The writer outlined the successes which the strike had achieved notwithstanding its limitations and the opposition it encountered from PAC and the Anti-CAD:

Those of us who expected... a breakdown of the state's organisation are inclined to admit defeat... but they have a wrong conception of the purpose and functions of mass political action... Many observers claim that the constitutional issue did not appeal to the 'politically immature' Africans who are concerned mainly with the removal of specific grievances... People who argue that the demand for the vote is untimely must surely be blind to the state of opinion at home... Not the least valuable of the lessons that Africans learned was that the Coloured shared their detestation of colour discrimination and were as willing as they to risk imprisonment and loss of jobs in the cause of liberation... The object of a mass campaign is to harass the government, put it on the defensive, hamper its

normal operations and undermine confidence in its stability... In these respects the stay-away achieved a magnificent success... The campaign, by undermining confidence in the government, helped to detach support from it and to sharpen the demand also among whites for parliamentary reform... So far therefore from having been a failure, the stay-home campaign accomplished many important results. (51)

This special correspondent may have been minimising the problems in the conception and execution of the strike but his conclusion offered a prescient warning against what was rapidly emerging as a new orthodoxy within sections of the liberation movement:

The people who denounce such forms of mass action and who by implication if not in words advocate recourse to terrorism and violence, cannot show that more will be gained by these means. Mass protests and the political strike have proved to be effective weapons of sabotage and harassment, valuable agencies of political education and organisation, and unrivalled methods of detaching white support from the government and its apartheid policies. These are the aims of political warfare on which a disenfranchised people must rely. (52)

In the national leadership of Congress, by contrast, key figures moved to the view that the old methods were no longer appropriate and that recourse to violence was the only road. The Communist Party appears to have already come to this decision prior to the Republic Day action, which might go some way toward explaining the peculiarities surrounding it: why a utopian demand was made at the start? why it was called off after one day? why the initially favourable assessment of its results

was reversed? While it was certainly true that the old strategic methods were found wanting, the question remains as to why a turn to armed struggle appeared as the remedy for their defects.

Ch. 12

The Turn to Armed Struggle

All the major sections of the liberation movement made similar diagnoses of the defects present in the old methods. They lay, it was said, in pacifism and legalism. The cure for the old ailments followed from the diagnosis. It lay in the abandonment of pacifism and legalism and more positively in the turn to armed struggle. The three most significant sections of the liberation movement each established its own armed wing. Congress formed Umkonto We Siwe (Spear of the Nation), the PAC formed Pogo (Alone) and an alliance of radicals and trotskyists formed the National Committee of Liberation, later known as the African Resistance Movement (ARM). In addition a small group made up mostly of former Unity Movement activists, formed the Yi Chu Chan Club, later known as the National Liberation Front. These different armed bodies were both organisationally and politically distinct, each adopting its own distinctive form of armed struggle. Umkonto went for disciplined sabotage by select saboteurs aimed at installations like pylons and rail lines but not at people. For Umkonto the prospect of moving from sabotage toward guerilla warfare was put on the agenda but not adopted. Pogo advocated mass insurrection based on the encouragement of spontaneous violence from below and aimed its own violence at persons as well as material symbols of white society. The ARM chose sabotage against property but found itself by default also killing civilians.

Various individuals out of the control of the armed organisations used them as an umbrella to execute their own forms of violence.

Among the general influences behind the turn to arms, Leo Kuper, though himself committed to non-violence, drew attention in 1960 to the 'patent successes of violent action' elsewhere in Africa. 'Who could have foretold the constitutional and social changes in Kenya, following upon the Mau Mau,' Kuper asked, 'or the quick pace of constitutional reform in the Belgian Congo after the riots of Leopoldville?' (1) An official history of the ANC has noted that 'the successes of armed struggle in Algeria and the victory of the Cuban revolution in Latin America were sources of great inspiration to our people' (2). The works of Regis Debray and Che Guevara were widely read in left wing circles with their suggestion that one could create the objective conditions for the revolutionary overthrow of the state through armed resistance. Che Guevara's 'Guerilla Warfare' was distributed among activists in South Africa with its doctrine of action: 'A revolution does not have to be delayed until everything is ready. The revolution itself can make things ready'.

For the Communist Party Jo Slovo echoed this view when he recounted that 'the deliberate creation of organised groups which embark upon protracted armed revolutionary struggle to transform society at a time when the moment of insurrection had not yet matured... lends a special stamp to the revolutionary guerilla struggles which have punctuated

recent history from China to Vietnam' (3). In the early 1960s armed struggle was also on the agenda in the Portuguese colonies of Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Angola and theorised by revolutionaries like Amilcar Cabral and Agostinho Neto. Guerilliarism was in the air and there were few on the left in South Africa who resisted its attractions.

Umkonto We Sizwe

The decision of Congress to turn to armed struggle is wrapped in a certain amount of mystery. It was under pressure of being outflanked on the left by Poqo and the National Committee of Liberation, but the internal initiative appears to have come from the Communist Party. At its December 1960 conference, that is, before the Republic Day strike, the SACP resolved in favour of a campaign of economic sabotage to precede a guerilla war. Six months later in June 1961, immediately after the Republic Day strike, Umkonto We Sizwe (MK) was formed by a group of Congress activists, including a number of SACP leaders, as a non-racial armed underground independent of Congress itself. The decision was made by a small group of people with, naturally enough, no debate among the broader ranks of Congress (4). In November 1961 *Fighting Talk* carried an article saying that 'peaceful solutions have become impossible when one of the contending giants resorts continually to force'. It also commented that in spite of his Christian pacifism 'the Chief (Lutuli) will move with his people and his times' (5).

MK conducted its initial acts of sabotage on December 16 1961 and issued a flyer explaining its actions. It dissociated itself from the Committee for National Liberation, which had itself already begun its sabotage campaign. It announced that it was a new and independent body formed by africans but including in its ranks individuals of all races. It said that it fully supported the national liberation movement and that its members placed themselves 'under the overall political guidance of that movement'. It added that government repression had left it 'no choice' but to fight, but expressed the hope that 'even at this late hour... we will bring the government and its supporters to their senses... before matters reach the desperate stage of civil war' (6).

Initially the relation between Congress and Umkonto was unresolved. The Natal leaders of Congress sought clarification at a June 1962 national meeting of the joint Congress executives and were told that some ANC leaders were in contact with Umkonto and that the organisation was designed to undertake sabotage in connection with non-violent ANC campaigns. According to Rowley Arenstein, a leading congressite in Natal opposed to the turn to armed struggle, Natal pressed for and won a guarantee that Umkonto would tailor its activities to specific ANC requests (7). The National High Command of Umkonto conceded that it would be 'at all times subject... to the political guidance of the ANC and would not undertake any different form of activity from that contemplated without the consent of the ANC' (8). The central committee of the SACP, however, according to Arenstein issued a statement arguing

that Umkonto was an independent body which could not be reasonably expected to subordinate itself to the ANC.

For its part the ANC was still committed to sustaining mass political action through community and trade union organisations alongside the sabotage activities of Umkonto. On his trip abroad between January and July 1962 Mandela emphasised in his speech at Addis the need for mass struggle to continue, noting that 'certainly the days of civil disobedience, of strikes and mass demonstrations are not over and we will resort to them over and over again' (9). It was only at the end of 1962, that is one and a half years after the formation of Umkonto, that a formal ANC-Umkonto relationship was acknowledged by the ANC at its national conference in Lobatsi, Bechuanaland. A report of the conference proceedings was issued by the ANC national executive in April 1963 referring to the two wings of the national liberation movement: 'the mass political wing spearheaded by the ANC... and the specialised military wing represented by Umkonto'. It re-affirmed the importance of mass action: 'our emphasis still remains mass political action. The political wing will ever remain the necessary and integral part of the fight'. It also seems to have affirmed the precedence of the military needs of Umkonto over mass action when it presented political agitation as 'the only way of creating the atmosphere in which military action can most effectively operate' (10).

In 1963 the ANC interpreted mass political action as the formation of a 'united front' of all anti-government political forces. The language of the united front carried over from the late 1950s but it was now afforded a totally different content. The term now represented the building of 'a permanent crisis' in which 'the people must resist oppression all the time, they must refuse to be governed,.. they must take the initiative to attack without giving the rulers time to reflect' (11). The ANC called for agitation and propaganda on every issue: wages, rents, ejections from homes, deportations, bannings, arrests, stock culling, Bantu authorities, forced removals, mass starvation and so forth.

In the same year the *African Communist* sought to re-define the arena of mass action as follows:

Every attempt to redress or rectify a local or partial grievance is necessarily connected with and can only be won by the defeat of the Nationalist government itself and the end of white minority rule,.. Does that mean that it is useless to campaign on any sort of local issue or partial grievance? ... No, that would be wrong... Real liberation leaders cannot escape their duty to take part in their everyday struggles for higher wages, against pass laws, group areas and mass evictions, against Bantu authorities and bantustans... It means that each crucial struggle... will inevitably develop into a struggle for state power. (12)

New conditions, declared the SACP, demand new methods. Legal mass work

had to continue but now constituted only 'a minor side of work... illegal work is the major side' (13). The masses were enjoined to 'fight back on every front... merging every local or partial struggle into a mighty river of people's insurrection'. If the united front of 1958 was based on the conscious containment of working class militancy, the united front of 1962-63 was based on permanent crisis and ungovernability. The words remained the same but their meaning was entirely transformed.

The readiness of the masses themselves to resort to violence appeared to Congress as a crucial determinant of its turn to armed struggle. Mandela placed much emphasis on this aspect, when speaking from the dock three years after the turn to arms, he pointed to the gap which had grown in the 1950s between popular conceptions of violence and the non-violent principles of the ANC:

For a long time the people had been talking of violence - of the day when they would fight the white man and win back their country - and we, the leaders of the ANC, had nevertheless always prevailed upon them to avoid violence and to pursue peaceful methods... It could not be denied that our policy to achieve a non-racial state by non-violence had achieved nothing and that our followers were beginning to lose confidence in this policy. (14)

Mandela argued that violence was already a regular feature of the South African political scene and that the period which ended in 1961 was one of non-violence for the ANC but not for the masses:

There had been violence in 1957 when the women of Zeerust were ordered to carry passes; there was violence in 1958 with the enforcement of cattle culling in Sekhukuneland; there was violence in 1959 when the people of Cato Manor protested against the pass raids; there was violence in 1960 when the government attempted to impose Bantu authorities in Pondoland... In 1961 there had been riots in Warmbaths and all this time the Transkei had been a seething mass of unrest. Each disturbance pointed clearly to the inevitable growth among Africans of the belief that violence was the only way out...' (15).

Mandela drew the conclusion that unless responsible leadership were given to canalise and control the feelings of the people, there would be outbreaks of terrorism which would intensify bitterness and hostility between the races. He viewed the prospect of a civil war between the races with alarm, since it would mean 'the destruction of what the ANC stood for'... with civil war racial peace would be more difficult than ever to achieve' (16). He believed that violence was inevitable, so that the point was not to avoid it but rather to direct it. If the danger lay in unplanned spontaneity, the solution lay in proper control.

The choice of sabotage as the preferred form of violence was made since it did not 'involve loss of life and it offered the best hope for future race relations. Bitterness would be kept to a minimum' (17). Economic sabotage would scare capital from the country and in the long run be a heavy drain on the economic life of South Africa. Eventually white voters would be forced to reconsider their position. The attacks would

further serve 'as a source of inspiration to our people,.. an outlet for those people who were urging the adoption of violent methods,.. and concrete proof to our followers that we had adopted a stronger line and were fighting back' (18). Avoiding loss of life, sympathy for the cause would be roused in other countries. On some occasions a larger claim was made for sabotage. Thus in an ANC leaflet in May 1963 it was argued that 'smashed railway-lines, damaged pylons carrying electricity across the country, bombed out petrol dumps cut Verwoed off from his power and leave him helpless' (19).

The strategy of 'properly controlled violence' led Congress into an ambivalent relation to local initiatives. In 1963 *African Communist* wrote that even unplanned desperate retaliation steels the forces of liberation and that they did not take a merely critical attitude towards the 'pogo' type outbreaks; 'they do not,.. seek to dampen or discourage the revolutionary spirit abroad,.. Instead they aim to harness that spirit' (20). Yet it also wrote that 'responsible leaders cannot merely follow the policies of desperate and impatient men who grow reckless and clamour for any sort of action regardless of the consequences' (21). On the one hand it said that they could not and should not restrain the people and that action had to be taken on local initiative when and where the masses were ready. On the other hand, it said that reprisals and blind rioting would only result in serious political setbacks for their cause, damaging the prestige of Congress at home and abroad and exposing the people to a 'crushing defeat'. Local action had thus always to be 'principled in accordance with the established policy of

the national leadership', Pogo was analysed as 'in essence an uncontrolled and violent reaction to oppression... an outlook of blind revenge on Whites... not an organised political movement with an ideology and long term policy'. What was needed rather was organised and planned *mass* self-defence and resistance, but since *organised* mass resistance was not yet possible it was first necessary to raise the consciousness of the masses through organised non-mass violence or in other words sabotage.

Writing in the *Star* concerning the 1962-63 period, Walter Sisulu commented that africans in the Western Cape 'were seething and planning acts of violence' and that 'the position was very desperate indeed'. Mbeki was sent down to 'appease the Africans... A plan was worked out... for an anti-pass campaign which would culminate in a national strike and the burning of passes. We had in mind that by June we would be ready for a national strike. But this did not materialise... The idea was put into the background. It was to have been the major ANC campaign of 1963' (22). The difficulty facing Congress was not dissimilar to that which it faced in the Defiance Campaign. It sought to stimulate mass action through the force of example - in the one case defiance and in the other sabotage - but it did not want the blind rioting and indiscriminate attacks on white civilians and property which went along with mass action. Congress could find no way out of its dilemma.

There were key figures within Umkonto who, seeing sabotage not as an end in itself but as the first shot in a protracted struggle of the masses, made provision for the extension of sabotage into guerilla war. Mandela, said in court that the main purpose of his trip abroad in 1962 was to organise training for guerilla warfare, even though he conceded on his return that 'it would be a long time before the possibilities of sabotage were exhausted'. An editorial in *African Communist* in early 1963 saw the significance of sabotage as an initial stage, designed to 'inspire a mood of confidence among people', in 'a process of training and preparation for the building of a formidable military force' and in this light believed that it took on 'an entirely new significance' (23). Among the documents found by the police in July 1963 at Rivonia, the headquarters of Umkonto, was a blueprint for moving toward guerilla war called 'Operation Mayibuye'. It had not been finally approved by Umkonto or the ANC but it offers evidence of the strategic thinking of a significant wing of the movement. Its premise was that little if any scope existed 'for the smashing of white supremacy other than by means of mass revolutionary action, the main content of which is armed resistance leading to victory by military means', and that 'no mass struggle which is not backed up by armed resistance and military offensive operations can hope to make a real impact'. Since the immediate situation was not revolutionary and the possibility of a general uprising was remote, a revolutionary situation had to be constructed; 'as in Cuba the general uprising must be sparked off by organised and well prepared guerilla operations' (24).

The plan was to place in the field armed and trained guerilla bands while at the same time issuing 'a general call for unprecedented mass struggle... both violent and non-violent', which together would create havoc for the enemy and a boost to the people's morale. A provisional revolutionary government would be set up abroad and the country itself would be 'bombarded by a flood of leaflets by plane announcing the commencement of our armed struggle... and calling on the population to rise against the government'. To prepare for this, local guerilla groups would be set up, sabotage intensified and political activity increased to draw the masses in support of the guerillas. Eventually a full-scale guerilla war inside the country would develop in which the struggle would rely on the support of the people for its protection and on the enemy for its supply of guns. Cuba was the model to which appeal was made.

There were those in Umkonto who were opposed to Operation Mayibuye. In his trial Braam Fisher described it as 'an entirely unrealistic brainchild of some youthful and adventurous imagination... If there was ever a plan which a marxist could not approve in the then prevailing circumstances, this was such a one... If any part of it at all could be put into operation, it could achieve nothing but disaster' (25). It would appear that others in Umkonto also opposed this plan, including Govan Mbeki and Dennis Goldberg. Fisher's statement expressed his belief that a revolutionary situation could not be brought into existence by what Jo Slovo was later to characterise in another context as Blanquism,

that is, 'the belief that the actions of the small, heroic and dedicated group will on its own stimulate mass support' (26).

White society did not undergo a change of heart as a result of sabotage. On the contrary, as Mandela recognised later, 'the Whites failed to respond by suggesting change; they responded to our call by suggesting the laager' (27). The Sabotage Act became law in June 1962 in the face of United Party parliamentary opposition and large demonstrations. It allowed for 90-day detention without trial and defined sabotage broadly enough to include strike action. By July over a hundred people had been banned and fifty more were added in the next eight months. Mandela was arrested on his return to South Africa in August and in September COD was banned and all meetings on Johannesburg City Hall steps were prohibited for one year. In October-November Mandela was on trial and all protest gatherings were prohibited until April 1963. In November *New Age* was banned but reappeared temporarily as the *Spark*. The state pursued a vast programme of expansion of its police and armed forces. The passing of a series of security laws, coupled with sophisticated interrogation techniques said to have been learnt from the French in Algeria, provided the state with information leading to the arrest of most of the experienced leaders of Umkonto. The arrests at Rivonia of the High Command and the subsequent ability of the regime to mop up the second level Umkonto leadership and its rank-and-file members decimated the underground. By 1964 Umkonto We Sizwe had been uprooted having reportedly committed 193 acts of sabotage and having caused damage

estimated at under £100,000. By about 1966 little of the armed underground was left inside the country.

The view repeatedly expressed by Umkonto was that the weakness of the government made it vulnerable to violent attack. For example, a lead editorial in the *African Communist* in late 1962, entitled 'How Strong is Verwoed?' declared that 'the reality is weakness'. First, the government had no friends abroad whereas the freedom movement has genuine friends who would support it 'as soon as it enters into a serious struggle for power'. Without foreign support, it argued, no government could survive unless it rules with the consent of the majority of the people. Second, the South African state was weak compared to the classic colonial powers since 'its armed forces are smaller, the pool of whites is smaller, its armaments are inferior,.. its industrial base smaller,.. it is isolated,.. on the edge of a crisis' (28). In 1963 the *African Communist* repeated this theme. The regime, it claimed, was being driven into a position of isolation abroad and at home; a minority, however heavily armed, cannot prevail over the great majority of the people. Each further act of repression by the state, regardless of its actual efficacy, appeared as a sign of deepening crisis. The state was beset by contradictions but the crucial point was that as armed struggle substituted for mass struggle, the state became ever stronger, having found a terrain which it could control more effectively than the mass struggles of the previous period.

The sabotage campaign failed to incite the masses into action. On the contrary, the mass organisations of Congress collapsed under the strain. On the trade union front, SACTU, which was not outlawed, continued to operate but the focus on armed struggle within the liberation movement shifted it away from its trade union priorities. SACTU shared the view that the state was confronted by a revolutionary crisis. For example, its press statement on the Sabotage Bill said that the Bill was 'a recognition of the devastating blows dealt the government by the resistance to apartheid... a last ditch stand of the white supremacists' (29). With victories like this, the movement did not need defeats. SACTU adopted the language of working class leadership, declaring in 1963 that workers are 'the pillar... the spearhead... the vanguard' of the liberation struggle and that SACTU was aware of their 'historic role of leading the struggle' (30). It even called on white workers to 'stop their group thinking' and 'think of their class interest'. The content it ascribed to working class leadership, however, was support for the armed struggle. Feit has argued that the turn to armed struggle hived off the best worker militants from SACTU; instead of organising workers at the point of production, working class activists were either sent away or willingly gravitated away from the factories to Umkonto and it was SACTU's specific role to act as a feeder for this operation (31). Whatever the truth of this claim, SACTU's official historians have confirmed that 'many SACTU militants became active members of MK' (32)

Individual unions continued to organise. In 1962 for instance *Workers' Unity*, SACTU's newspaper, picked out for special mention the struggles

of Durban Municipal Workers, Howick Rubber Workers and the Textile Union (which split under the pressures of political differences). *Workers Unity* boasted that 'the role of SACTU had grown to phenomenal heights' (33), but the NEC of SACTU received numerous complaints that it did not give adequate support to individual unions, that there was not enough factory organisation, that FOFATUSA was taking advantage of SACTU's lack of trade union initiatives and so forth. By the time of the 9th Annual Conference in March 1964, 45 SACTU officials and members had been detained or banned and much of the rest of its leadership was in exile. The Conference Report conceded that 'the future for SACTU is grim':

Our loyal and devoted officials are suffering privations in every city in South Africa, unable to find employment anywhere since their bans... But SACTU is not doomed... A trade union is not the secretary in the office but the workers in the factory... You are the trade union... Your unions are legal. Do not be intimidated... There is nothing to stop you getting together with your fellow workers. (34)

There may have been nothing to stop workers getting together with fellow workers (except the law, the state and the employers) but hereafter the officials of SACTU (which remained formally legal) went into exile, leaving workers to get together without their help. The trade union organisation of black workers sunk to its lowest ebb for many years. In 1961 59,952 workers belonged to 63 unions in SACTU; by 1969 only 13 unions with 16,040 members were known to exist among african workers generally. It was an unhappy end for non-racial trade unionism in this period, brought about not just by the weight of repression and the

structural weaknesses of the black working class but also by a misplaced political conception of revolution.

The official historiography and its critics

In what it called its 'revolutionary programme' on *Strategy and Tactics*, passed at its Third Consultative Conference at Morogoro in 1969, the ANC put forward its own retrospective account of the turn to armed struggle. The document sought to justify the decisions that were made in spite of the terrible defeats that were suffered between the 1961 turn and the 1969 conference. It said that there had been 'no choice' but for the liberation movement to break from the constraints of legalism and non-violence and move toward the revolutionary path of armed struggle. The state was becoming increasingly fascist in its methods. The masses were reaching out for their own violent solutions. The old methods of mass struggle 'could no longer be effectively employed, . . . (and) were demonstrably no longer feasible, . . . (since) all opposition by legal or peaceful means was rendered impossible' (35).

This account had the hallmark of a *post hoc* rationalisation rather than a critical re-evaluation. The feasibility of legal and peaceful means was an entirely different question from that of mass strikes and demonstrations which in South Africa were unlikely to be legal or peaceful. In 1960-61, immediately before the turn to armed struggle, mass strikes were mounted which were deemed successful by the liberation

organisations at the time and certainly shook the apartheid regime. Mass mobilisation declined after the Republic Day strike but many of the mass organisations were still operating either under their own name or under pseudonyms. There was no reason to believe that the decline of mass mobilisation under the weight of state repression was permanent or irremediable. The sharp upturn in the economy which followed the 1960-61 crisis did not give support to the view that 'a revolutionary situation was unfolding in the country' (36), but it did provide favourable economic conditions for re-constructing the working class movement. The GDP increased by 7% per annum over the six year period between 1961 and 1966 and reached 9.4% in 1963; in 1962 gold production reached record levels, there was a 50% increase in building and a nearly 6% increase in secondary industry; in 1964 the decline of foreign investment was reversed and in 1965 large amounts of capital began to enter the country again. These facts were well known but the 1969 conference omitted to mention how advantageous the growth of secondary industry in particular was to trade union and other forms of popular organisation.

In what sense then were the old methods no longer feasible? Perhaps popular organisations would have been suppressed anyway, whether or not the turn to armed struggle had taken place, but this could not be foretold in advance nor could the mass organisations be therefore abandoned to their fate. History was turned on its head. The ANC defended its exclusive use of non-violent means in the 1950s on the ground that the leadership had to 'relate to the masses and not just to its advanced elements'; and that before the turn to armed struggle could

occur, it was imperative to wait for the overwhelming majority of the people to experience 'disillusionment with the prospect of achieving liberation by traditional peaceful processes' and to learn 'through their own participation, . . . that in the long run the privileges of the minority will only be wrenched from it by a reversion to armed combat' (37). But who were the bearers of these illusions? Mandela revealed that many sections of the masses did not share their leaders' commitments to non-violence and that the history of the 1950s was not short of violent confrontations between black workers and state forces. The image of a deep gulf between the non-violent and violent phases of the struggle was true of the ANC itself but not of the masses. Their reality was more fluid as one form of struggle flowed into another: strikes, demonstrations, stay-aways, civil disobedience, pickets, boycotts, self-defence, riots and violent confrontations. If it was necessary for the leadership to wait for the masses to experience disillusionment through their own participation, why then did the leadership not add theoretical lessons to the practical and find some means (given the constraints of law) of telling the masses that their struggles were doomed in advance? would this not have shortened the period of study for the masses?

In 1969 the turn to sabotage was re-interpreted as a first step on the road to guerilla warfare on the lines set out in Operation Mayibuye. This was despite the fact that neither Umkonto nor the ANC had endorsed Operation Mayibuye. The ANC now wrote:

We understood that the main physical environment of such a struggle in the initial period is outside the enemy

strongholds in the cities, in the vast stretches of our countryside. The opening steps in 1961 - organised sabotage mainly in the urban areas - served a special purpose and was never advanced as a technique which would on its own either lead to the destruction of the state or even do it great material damage. (38)

The special purpose of urban sabotage was seen as laying the foundation of guerilla war in three ways: by creating 'an experienced professional military apparatus', by demonstrating that the movement was making 'a sharp and open break with the processes of the previous period' and by demonstrating the need 'to provide an effective method for the overthrow of white supremacy through planned rather than spontaneous activity'. What went wrong according to this account were three factors. First the viciousness of the state's response caught the movement unprepared. As *Sechaba* put it, 'still suffering from the habit of semi-legal days prior to the banning of the movement, we had not yet devised a tight conspiratorial method of work... Notorious traitors emerged' (39). Second, the movement was over-optimistic concerning the 'readiness of the outside world and in particular of the emergent nations of Africa to isolate South Africa' and under-estimated the tenacity of the imperialist forces to support the apartheid regime. Third, the policy depended on 'the high level of active militancy amongst the people' which was not in the event sustained. In short failure was blamed on the the repressiveness of the state and its allies, on traitors in the ranks and lack of support from independent African states and on the declining militancy of the masses. The turn to armed struggle itself was exempted from any criticism except for its over-optimism in relation to its

friends and under-estimation of its enemies. The turn to armed struggle was finally justified on the cryptic grounds that 'without activity of this nature our whole political leadership may have been at stake both inside and outside the country', by which was presumably meant fear of being outflanked by the PAC and other left oppositions. Did this mean that even if the policy was a wrong one for the masses, considerations of maintaining political leadership were more important?

Writing in the mid-1970s Jo Slovo echoed this official view. He conceded that

examining only the results of MK sabotage in its narrow immediate sense, critics ... have had a gala day... Sabotage of property... could neither bring about the downfall of the government nor draw into action those not already in the fairly small conspiratorial group of activists. The organised beginnings of sabotage and the semi-spontaneous outbursts of the PAC-inspired Poqo in 1962 acted however as a spur to government counter-action, culminating in blows which led to the virtual destruction of all effective levels of leadership and organisation within the country'(40).

Slovo further conceded that serious mistakes were made but not that 'all the reverses were due to avoidable errors'. He too claimed that sabotage was seen as the first stage of a long-term, multi-staged campaign of disciplined violence in which a hard core of trained militants, supported by mass-based political activity and external aid, would confront state power with the ultimate goal of seizing it. While

agreeing that this did not materialise, he nonetheless argued that sabotage served as 'a politically useful bridge between the period of non-violent campaigning and the future people's armed struggle'. According to Slovo, Operation Mayibuye had been elaborated by the High Command of Umkonto and 'the broad conception behind the plan cannot be faulted'. What went wrong by this account was only that 'the objective obstacles to the implementation of such a plan in the 1963 South African situation were not properly appreciated'. The plan itself, abstracted from the material conditions of its execution, seemed faultless!

Slovo conceded one further and important factor: 'the increasing concentration on military preparation helped to generate an attitude both within the organisation and among the people that the fate of the struggle depended upon the sophisticated actions of a professional conspiratorial elite. The importance of mass work was theoretically appreciated, but in practice mass political work was minimal'. It is not clear, however, what form Slovo believed mass action was to take during the period of sabotage if the old methods of mass non-violent action were exhausted and local unplanned forms of violence were ruled out,

Slovo and *Strategy and Tactics* presented the official view of the turn to armed struggle, which they justified as the right and necessary course of action despite the defeats which followed. From within the Communist Party a more critical analysis has been put forward by Ben Turok in a debate with Jo Slovo over the armed strategy (41), Turok's

critique was centered on the timing and form of the turn to armed struggle. He argued that 'in retrospect it may seem remarkable how slow the idea was to attain ascendancy in the liberation movement' and that 'even when the need for violence was recognised, how tardy the implementation was of the first steps'. Turok sought to explain this in terms of the obstacles which impeded 'the kind of cool re-assessment needed': state repression, the lack of an alternative model in black Africa, save in Algeria which was 'swimming in blood and not encouraging', and the gulf between conditions in Cuba and those in South Africa.

For Turok not only was the turn to arms late but 'the actual form of the campaign led down the road to disaster'. He criticised the sabotage campaign for reproducing in new form the old politics of appealing to the conscience and reason of white society instead of organising the masses. Turok offered what should stand as a perceptive critique of the limits of sabotage:

While sabotage provided the government with every excuse for unleashing a brutal wave of terror, it failed to mobilise the mass of the people who seemed to be left outside the arena from the time of the first blasts. Sabotage remained the weapon of an elite corps in the liberation movement. As a consequence, sabotage had the effect of isolating the organised movement from the mass who felt unable to join in this new phase or even to defend the actionists when they were seized... Having talked of fascism for a decade or

more, the movements were nevertheless caught by surprise when the police behaved like fascists... The sabotage campaign failed on the main count - it did not raise the level of action of the masses themselves. Although it seems that the masses supported and even welcomed the resort to force, they could find no way of joining in and expressing their support. They were left on the threshold, frustrated by-standers of a battle being waged on their behalf...

Sabotage was seen as another vehicle for protest and not as the first shots in a protracted struggle in which the masses had to play a crucial part. (42)

What was needed according to Turok was a form of struggle in which 'the masses had to play a crucial part'. Turok's own solution was to look to mass-based guerilliarism, to which end he offered a technicist critique of Operation Mayibuye. While Umkonto had used 'highly technical gadgetry', he argued that the movement should have begun with 'the simplest methods' which would have been more easily assimilated by the people, while the method of Operation Mayibuye was 'too advanced and the organisation inadequate'. It should have prepared 'a line of defence and retreat': defence in the sense of 'organisational arrangements which ensure that a leak to the police does not lead to the disclosure of a long chain of the organisation' and retreat in the sense of 'an adequate underground network of hiding places and routes for flight to nearby borders'. The basic problem with Operation Mayibuye in Turok's eyes was that 'without sound organisation at home, no developments abroad can really expect to lead to success, not least because of the absence of a friendly border' (43).

For Turok the model to be followed was neither that of Algeria which was 'swimming in blood' nor that of Cuba in which 'conditions and traditions were very different', but rather that of Vietnam. Citing Le Duan, Turok argued that the essential thing at an early stage of the struggle was 'raising the level of struggle step by step' and using methods 'that the masses could use too'. He argued that 'the very deep involvement of the Vietnamese peasants was due to the simplicity of the weaponry in the earlier days and it would seem that the parallel is appropriate'. Turok's critique of sabotage - that the masses were left on the threshold, frustrated bystanders of a battle being waged on their behalf - was to the point, Turok failed to explain, however, why a guerilliarist solution, based on methods of struggle which in their own way worked in the peasant-based economy of Vietnam, was anything more than phantasy when transferred to the most urban and industrialised country of Africa where the masses were not peasants but workers.

There were individuals and groups within the Communist Party who rejected the turn to armed struggle in its entirety. Rowley Arenstein, an activist in Natal, has been the most articulate among them or at least the most interviewed. He recalls that

There was much wild talking at the time. The idea was that there should be isolated sabotage acts in the beginning. These would move rapidly into greater and greater acts of sabotage until large centres would be involved in sabotage and then these would finally end up in the masses moving en masse to sabotage, general strike and the taking over of the

country. (44)

Of the major influences behind the turn, Arenstein argued, a vital one was the success of Castro in Cuba; 'if Castro could do it in two years, why couldn't they do it? It was a false analogy'. In Cuba the state fell apart, the fragile victim of its own corruption and lack of social base or this was not the case in South Africa (45). Arenstein believed that it was

a complete misunderstanding of the situation and a completely wrong analysis of the forces at work... which had terrible effects on the growth of the mass movement in South Africa. To my mind, certain of the leaders were always dissatisfied with taking things over a long term. They were keen to get things settled as quickly as possible... It seemed such a novel, one may say, easy way to solve the problems... It was this simplistic attitude that was entirely wrong. There was a sense of complete euphoria about this... They did not take into account the strength of the state. (46)

Arenstein observed that an important stimulus behind the turn to armed struggle was the Pondo uprising and the violence used in its course, but with personal experience of rural revolts he pointed out that by the time Congress took the decision to turn to armed struggle, 'the Pondos themselves had decided to take the question of violence no further and were looking to other methods of struggle' (47).

Arenstein seems to have been right that by 1961 the Pondos were moving away from armed confrontation. In July *New Age* carried a report on a set of interviews with Pondo leaders, in which it was said that 'the people are still full of spirit and fight' but that 'one thing is certain... We must evolve new methods of struggle... The Hill Committee and meetings on the Hill have served their purpose' (48). New methods in this context meant a move away from armed confrontation. For example, in 1963 a leaflet distributed illegally by the ANC read as follows;

The government have chosen the Western Cape and Transkei as the battle fields... We accept this challenge without regret... The time has come for us to adopt a new attitude toward rural areas... Peasant committees of migrant workers in the cities and of people in the countryside must be formed promptly to co-ordinate activities. (49)

The image of a peasant war does appear to have been a romantic fiction in the South African context, unrelated to the realities of proletarianisation; in Pondo, for example, over 60% of adult males were working as migrants at the time of the revolt. The revolt itself switched tactics from violence directed against the 'traditional chiefs', who were local agents of the state, to the more effective use of trade boycotts and pickets. Further the intense repression meted out to the Pondos - not just the shootings but the arrest of over 4700 africans - was successful in putting down the revolt and forcing many of the 'tribesmen' to pledge their support for the hated Paramount Chief Botha Sigau.

Despite nine months of fervent activity, the history of the Pondo revolt gives some support for the view of one commentator (J. Copelyn) that 'the isolated pockets of resistance in various reserves have never presented an effective challenge to the ruling class' (50). It seems too that there was truth to Arenstein's view that Congress leaders, having long neglected rural movements, now idealised them as a model for a rural guerilla campaign. Arenstein's own political alternative was less clear. (51)

Pogo

If Congress over-estimated the power of sabotage and under-estimated the damage it would cause for mass organisation and mobilisation, the fate of the armed struggle of the PAC is equally instructive. 'Pogo', the Xhosa word meaning 'pure' or 'alone', was set up by the Pan African Congress in 1961 independently of Umkonto. In spite of retrospective claims to the contrary, the PAC leadership, like Congress, had been formally committed to non-violence until 1961. When the PAC turned to violence, its method was different from that of the ANC. While Umkonto's declared strategy was in favour of 'controlled violence' without loss of life, Pogo emphasised mass spontaneity and attacks on persons. First african police were attacked, then there was an attack on Matanzima's palace in Emigrant Tembuland by several hundred men using spears and pangas, then an attack on a police station at Paarl in the Western Cape by badly armed men who on being repulsed killed a number of white civilians, and then the killing in February of 1963 in the Transkei of five white holiday-makers at Bashee River. There was a thin dividing line between sanctioned and unsanctioned attacks, as when Leballo's exiled leadership in Basutoland disclaimed responsibility for the Paarl and Bashee River killings, saying that the Cape Branch had acted independently (52).

Between Umkonto and Pogo no love was lost (despite a temporary 'united front' between the ANC and the PAC in exile). Pogo was alternatively

denounced as irresponsible for its attacks on civilians and for its endorsement of mass violence and as conservative for coming into the armed struggle late. Umkonto was denounced for its remoteness from the masses, its dependence on a small group of white communists and the half-hearted way it adopted a violent road. Poqo's mass insurrectionism, however, fared no better than Umkonto's planned sabotage. On April 1 1963, Leballo announced that a general uprising was imminent. The Basutoland police raided his headquarters and by 12 June 1963 3246 alleged Poqo men were arrested and a series of trials sought to establish that there were plans for a co-ordinated uprising. There was a short-term revival of PAC fortunes in 1965 followed by the conviction of 200 men in Port Elizabeth and 33 in the Western Cape.

Poqo revealed the limitations of the PAC'S left opposition to Congress. In the Cape, the spontaneist programme of the PAC meant that violence soon went out of control of the leadership. On the Rand, where organisation was tighter, the leaders were unprepared for violence. The organisation was soon infiltrated by the police, as when an african policeman became branch chairperson within two months of joining the organisation and was present when the plans for the mass uprising were being prepared. The use of school students by the Poqo attests both to its popularity and to its use of inexperienced youth. There was a messianic flavour to the movement with quasi-magical powers being bestowed on Sobukwe, its leader. The mix of christianity and traditional african spiritualism was expressed in the references to Sobukwe as our

'Shepherd' and to the name 'pogo' itself used by secessionist churches in South African in the 1920s.

Pogo's plans for the uprising were fantastical. With three weeks to organise, the cadres were instructed to converge on Pretoria and kill whites for four hours. Then they were to stop. Those whites who remained would be free to help participate in the new african government. To perform the killings, the branches were to be instructed in the making of crude petrol bombs. As Lodge comments, 'there is a sense of complete unreality about the proceedings, except for the undeniable commitment and courage shown by the accused in the trial. What happened in the Cape sprang from the desperation of the conditions there; in the Transvaal the external leadership was trying to impose the crude strategy of a fantastic scenario on unprepared schoolchildren' (53).

The African Resistance Movement

The third group to turn to armed struggle came from the ranks of the Liberal Party, some of whose more radical members joined with trotskyists from the Socialist League in Johannesburg and the Workers' Democratic League in Cape Town to form what was initially called the National Committee of Liberation and then re-named the African Resistance Movement in 1964. Critical of the ANC-SACP's united front strategy in the 1950s and calling for independent working class leadership, this small alliance of anti-communist liberals and

trotskyists set up an organisation that was very similar to Umkonto in that it was non-racial, committed to sabotage of property and formally socialist. The trotskyists claimed that its formation preceded that of Umkonto.

Trotskyists who joined the NCL-ARM had long been calling for a more working class orientation in Congress and for the abandonment of multi-racialism in favour of a fully non-racial movement. Why, however, these groupings moved into armed adventurism remote from the working class at the same time or even before Congress, is a question that has never been satisfactorily addressed. Here we can point only to some of the factors. For the trotskyists, the turn to armed struggle was a reaction to the popular front politics of Congress and the Communist Party, which the trotskyists misconstrued as the essential hallmark of stalinism, as well as to their own inability to create an alternative centre of gravity for workers. The frustrated effort of members of the Socialist League in Johannesburg in 1960 to persuade SACTU to call out workers in the Transvaal in support of the mass strike in the Cape and Natal, was a case in point. It was one factor which seems to have led them to resort to more desperate forms of action (54).

The most striking feature of the 1960-61 period was the political convergence of stalinism and trotskyism around the turn to armed struggle. The trotskyists had fixated on two-stage theory - that is, the artificial separation of the democratic and socialist tasks of the

revolution - as the defining characteristic of stalinism. So when the Communist Party turned left in the period 1959-61, the trotskyists were thrown into total confusion. They either mirrored the policies of the Communist Party or sought to outflank them by declaring that they were insufficiently left and that what was needed was a more revolutionary version of the self-same policies.

We can glimpse at the political reasoning of the trotskyists through the bulletins of the Workers Democratic League (55). Seeking to draw the lessons of the March days of 1960 they argued that there was no revolutionary crisis in South Africa since the rulers still found it possible to rule and since there was no revolutionary party. The only condition of revolution which they thought was realised was the ferment of the masses. They argued, however, that the events around Sharpeville had 'shattered the illusions of peaceful demonstrations and passive resistance'. They rejected 'national liberation' in the forms of multi-racialism and non-europeanism as utterly obsolescent. And they stressed the class nature of the struggle: 'the national struggle is the form in which the class struggle is expressing itself'. In their view racial policies were 'the ideological form in which class interests assert themselves... The colour bar is in sum both the mode of operation and mode of domination of capitalism in South Africa'. None of these positions substantially differed from the new left line of the SACP.

While not ruling out the possibility of minor reforms, these trotskyists saw the basis for serious reform in the ruling class as dead. They wrote for instance that when the strikers in 1960 demanded from the state that 'it should force the industrialists to negotiate with them for wage increases, this so-called progressive bourgeoisie maintained the silence of the grave'. This was because in the final reckoning there was 'an identity of interest between mining, agriculture and manufacture' and because liberalism was merely the means to 'bring the movement under the heel of property'. What the Liberals did was to

arrogate to themselves all the traditional slogans associated with the democratic movement: non-racial democracy, social equality and the like. 'The enemies of the people', said Robespierre, 'speak with the voice of the people in order to betray the people'. The Liberals held before the people the prospect of fighting alongside property in order to live under property. The PAC furnished them with the necessary mass base.

The trotskyists did not rule out trade union organisation but they stressed the 'limited scope' for trade union struggles and the 'ceiling to reforms that can be extracted'. Since 'every economic demand of the workers assumes a political form', they placed their focus not on trade union organisation but on building a class conscious party committed, as they put it, to 'proletarian methods'. They concluded that 'because of the more important political work, it is not possible for us to take a lead in forming new unions or in renovating old ones'.

Although the situation was not yet in their judgement revolutionary, they argued that it was rapidly becoming revolutionary since 'the dynamic productive forces are coming into open conflict with the static production relations'. Their argument was that in South Africa 'capitalism has shouldered on the worker himself the responsibility for supplementing his income by forcing the migrant to retain connections with small scale farming in the reserves,, but the inexorable law that capitalism must corrode all pre-capitalist social forms,,(entailed) the depletion of that supplementary source of income'. This contradiction was developing into a full-fledged revolutionary crisis which needed only a revolutionary party for it to mature. They saw themselves as the seeds of such a party.

Anti-liberalism, anti-reformism, anti-economism were the watchwords with which the trotskyists confronted the problem of new methods of struggle. These negative reference points were no basis for the development of a working class leadership but were rather conducive to a sectarian repudiation of all struggles for reform as reformism, all trade union work as economism and all strategies of democratisation as liberalism. The trotskyists were opposed to nationalism in the name of the leadership of the working class, but the idea that 'the national struggle is the form in which the class struggle is expressing itself' lent itself to an accomodation to nationalism. The doctrinal origins of this accomodation lay in a reified notion of permanent or uninterrupted revolution (the terms were used interchangeably), according to which the democratic revolution would necessarily and naturally have to 'grow

over' to a socialist revolution. The reason for this was in their view that racism was an 'essential component of capitalism' in South Africa and 'crucial to its continued existence' (56). The theory of 'combined and uneven development' was identified with the idea that africans suffer from what Kenny Jordaan called 'a double exploitation: as workers who produce surplus value and as blacks from whom an additional surplus is extracted by special legislation'. In South Africa, Jordaan argued with great perceptiveness, 'the last word in modern technology is combined with the most barbarous forms of exploitation and oppression; traditional backwardness with the most sophisticated forms of life' (57).

Do away with racism and backwardness, so it seemed, and the whole edifice of South African capitalism must come crumbling down. The national struggle against racism was identified with the struggle against capitalism and conversely without a struggle against capitalism there could be no genuine national struggle against racism. The national question was dissolved into the working class struggle for socialism while at the same time the working class struggle for socialism was dissolved into the struggle for true national liberation. The theory of permanent or uninterrupted revolution was turned into a metaphysics of history in which subject and predicate were reversed. The revolution appeared as the subject of history, while the real subject - the working class - appeared as its mere predicate. The working class became the instrument of revolution rather than revolution being the instrument of the working class. In the 1970s left Communist Party theoreticians

popularised these 'trotskyist' ideas as their own and treatises were written in which these concepts were juggled in any number of permutations on the head of a dialectical pin. In theoretical terms the achievements of the trotskyists in the 1950s had been considerable: not least in distinguishing between nationalism and ethnic communalism, in developing a class analysis of the struggle and in putting forward the importance of working class leadership. At the end of the period, however, with their eyes fixed on the critique of two-stage theory as the defining characteristic of stalinism, they themselves failed to escape from the prison house of left dogmatism.

The turn to armed struggle was for the trotskyists, to paraphrase Clausewitz, but a continuation of their peacetime politics. It proved to be no less a disaster that it was for the SACP. In October 1961, as the white political campaign for the general election was nearing its end, NLC saboteurs cut the steel legs of a pylon carrying power lines in Johannesburg, disrupted telephone service and burned an office of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development. In December 1961 it announced its achievements and declared that 'there was no longer any legal, democratic way to oppose the Nationalist government' (58). The NCL-ARM was destroyed in much the same way as Umkonto, through security lapses and the inability of some of its members to resist police questioning. Most of its members were already in gaol when John Harris, one of its last remaining free members, responded to the Rivonia Trial convictions by exploding a bomb in the white section of the Johannesburg railroad station, killing one old woman and injuring two dozen others.

He became the first white man among 45 persons hanged for politically inspired acts of violence between 1960 and 1964.

Ch. 13: Conclusion

The orthodox view that the liberation movement had 'no choice' but to turn to arms failed to engage with the political nature of the choice that was made. There were strong grounds for abandoning the doctrine of non-violence and the 'united front' approach of the 1950s, but the alternative of armed struggle represented a specific solution to the problem of the old methods, explicable only in relation to the constitution of the liberation movement itself. At each moment Congress was out of step with the tempo of the class struggle. In the period of working class militancy in the late 1950s Congress called on workers to temper their radicalism; when the workers' movement retreated after its historic struggles, Congress called on the masses to resist on every front. The turn to armed struggle did break through the constraints of legalism and pacifism but this advance addressed only the surface defects. Hidden beneath the debates about the legitimacy and efficacy of violence lay the question of class. From the point of view of the working class, the turn to armed struggle dissociated the liberation movement from its struggles. It left workers to fend for themselves in an increasingly hostile environment, while at the same time they could only be passive observers of an armed struggle carried out in their name.

The turn to arms, rather than resolving the alienation from the masses expressed in the old methods aggravated this alienation. In theoretical terms it was a problem of empiricism. By seeing only the problems which existed on the surface of the movement in the 1950s, legalism and pacifism,

and by failing to analyse the underlying sources of class estrangement, the liberation movement reproduced in its solution to its political crisis an exaggerated variant of the same class relations. Notwithstanding all the defects of the old methods, ties were established between the leaders and the masses. The turn to armed struggle, while transcending the narrow horizons of the bourgeois legality and initiating the search for revolutionary alternative, also severed the thread which linked the mass to the leadership. The long period of defeat which followed the turn to armed struggle - both for the mass struggles of the working class and for the national liberation movement itself - could not be divorced from the turn itself.

The '1950s' were over. For all the weaknesses in the conception and execution of mass struggle offered by the Congress Alliance, the period of mass struggle was one in which the seeds of - what we might call in the best sense of the term - social democracy were laid within the working class. In their community groups, trade unions, women's organisations, rural associations and the structures of Congress and other political bodies, mass struggles were waged for a democratic future. Through strikes, stay-aways, demonstrations, boycotts and violence the masses confronted again and again the power of the ruling class. They struggled for the right of self-organisation and for state reforms; they developed ideas of a future society free of apartheid and based on a state belonging to all regardless of race; they penetrated beneath the forms of apartheid to unearth the capitalist relations of exploitation which supported them.

By the end of the decade there was an urgent need to construct a new direction: away from the limitations of pacifism, legalism and multi-racialism; away from the petitions, deputations and appeals to liberal public opinion; away from undemocratic practices within the liberation movement; away from the politics of the 'united front'; away from the celebration of stalinism and other totalitarian images of socialism. The turn to armed struggle appeared as a revolutionary step forward, mirroring developments in Cuba, Algeria and Vietnam and Portugal's African colonies. In reality, however, the turn to armed struggle did not resolve the old problems. Rather it greatly magnified them in a new guise, for in turning to armed struggle the liberation movement turned away from its only real strength, its reliance on the working class. What was needed was a turn to the masses but it was not delivered.

The old methods, forms of organisation and ideas needed to be revised but not to be abandoned. Since the utilisation of these methods, forms of organisation and ideas did not lead to liberation, the liberation movement - at first unwittingly and reluctantly and then self-consciously and purposefully - turned its back upon them, not noticing that it was at the same moment turning its own back upon the working class itself. The liberation movement turned instead to a select group of saboteurs, agitators, guerilla fighters, diplomats, propagandists and writers who remained undefiled by reformism and through their exemplary actions and words would educate the masses until they became a force capable of accomplishing national liberation. This approach was permeated with individualism.

The mass struggles of the 1950s marked a certain period in the development of the working class, one not of revolution but of reform. The problem with the liberation movement of the 1950s was not that it was a movement for reform but rather that it was an inadequate movement for reform. It was inadequate in its theorisations of the state, its forms of organisation, its methods of struggle, its programmes of action and its ideas of socialism and liberation. These inadequacies were explicable developmentally in terms of the maturation of the working class movement and conjuncturally in terms of the residues of defeat suffered by the working class in the 1940s. They could be remedied. The organic growth of the working class continued through the 1950s and was about to accelerate rapidly in the 1960s, strengthening its economic weight and political potential. The liberation movement now had the benefit of much deeper experience to guide them for the future.

In 1961-62 the epoch of reform was not over. On the contrary, it was only in its infancy in South Africa. Comparing the course of evolution of the bourgeoisie with that of the working class, we may say that the working class needed a reformation of its own. The nub of the bourgeois reformation at the dawn of its independent social existence was that the bourgeoisie did not immediately set itself the task of conquering power but sought instead to secure for itself, within the framework of the old society, conditions best suited to its needs. This tendency expressed the relative historical weakness of the bourgeoisie. Only after securing these positions for itself could the bourgeoisie enter the struggle for state power. In the 1960s the working class in South Africa had not yet experienced its own

reformation either in the sense of enlarging the framework of the South African state and forcing it to adapt to the needs of the working class, or of securing its own independent forms of action and organisation in civil society.

In South Africa of the 1950s the adaptation of the masses to the forms of bourgeois society was a historically determined process occasioned by the structural and political weaknesses of the working class. It gave rise in this context not to a labour bureaucracy, as it did elsewhere, but to a political elite rooted in the traditions of liberal nationalism and opportunistic marxism. The new radicals who emerged in the 1960s, identifying this political leadership with the masses, fell prey to all manner of idealistic illusions. They proclaimed that the general strike was exhausted, economic strikes were exhausted, legal organisation was exhausted and reform was exhausted. According to this view the liberation movement had to begin anew and start with the 'head', that is, with select groups who separate and apart from the old forms of organisation would carry revolutionary truth to the masses, scrub it clean of all liberal and opportunistic prejudices and spruce it up for 'true' national liberation. They greatly exaggerated the respect of the masses for non-violence, constitutionalism and multi-racialism and ended up levelling their arguments against all forms and methods of working class struggle.

They created an organisation with a small, vacuum-packed membership, believing that this would safeguard it from ideological vacillations, but

found that organisations of the sectarian type are even more subject to them precisely because of their isolation from the masses. Since the bond between the political group and the mass was fixed through a pedagogic relation of example and enlightenment, at least until armed propaganda should seize hold of the consciousness of the masses, the centre of gravity necessarily remained with those who conducted this propaganda, the political leaders. The relationship between leaders and masses was conditioned by the cultural and political level of the working class, contingent upon the class organisation and education of the masses and their habits of mass action. Apart from the self-organisation and self-activity of the working class, there were no means to subordinate the leaders to the conscious and democratic control of the masses and without the masses there could be no revolution.

What new methods were adopted to replace the old was a matter of choice not necessity. The turn to armed struggle was rooted in a romantic equation of violence and revolution and uprooted from the forms and methods of working class action. Most strands of left opposition either mirrored or pre-empted or magnified the deficiencies of Congress. In South Africa, where the masses are proletarian, the struggle for political emancipation could not by-pass the working class. There was no short cut and no back entrance to liberation. By re-building its base in the unions, community organisations, rural associations and women's groups, and by re-constructing its socialist forms of political expression, the working class could fight back bit by bit to become a power in society and an influence on the state. Whether this view was combined with an ultimately revolutionary aim of seizing

state power or with a vision which stopped short at reform, there was no choice for the working class of South Africa but to go through its period of reformation. This is why we speak of the historic role of social democracy, not in the sense of a social system or form of state, but a working class movement for the emancipation of society as a whole. It was not until ten bitter years had passed - with the rebirth of an independent, non-racial trade union movement on the one side and of black consciousness on the other - that black workers began in the early 1970s the difficult task of drawing their own lessons. But there lies another story.

Nationalism, socialism and democracy

What can we learn from this history more generally on the relation between nationalism and socialism? It seems to me that there can be no simple formulae and I am not going to run through the extensive literature, marxist and non-marxist, on this subject. I shall limit myself to making some brief personal observations which derive from my historical analysis.

First, there is no reason in my thinking to withdraw from the orthodox marxist view that socialists should support national liberation struggles to the extent that they represent the democratic aspirations of a nation for self-determination. This support, however, should retain its own critical faculties and not subsume itself to nationalist ways of thinking. My overall conclusion is that in South Africa, particularly after the Second World War, socialists have tended to subordinate working class independence far too readily to one or other form of black nationalism on the misguided assumption that nationalism represents both the rational form of opposition to apartheid and the consciousness of the mass of the people. On both counts there is room for far more questioning than has usually been apparent.

Nationalism has represented a specific form of opposition to apartheid: one which has suffered from its own historical limitations. It has had great difficulty in avoiding reproducing what we might call 'state consciousness'

in its struggles against the apartheid state. By posing the democratic question in South Africa in a nationalist form, it has usually been compelled to embrace one or other of the racial pre-suppositions of apartheid: in its most primitive form tribalism, in a more advanced form african nationalism, or in a still more advanced form black nationalism. All these forms of nationalism, while expressing the struggle for freedom of the oppressed people of South Africa, have at the same time reflected in the body of the liberation movement the forms of political life embodied in the state. The building of a consistently democratic movement against apartheid, one that is fully independent of the state, requires a commitment to non-racialism which transcends all such limitations. What we often find in the history is the dressing up of race in nationalist clothes, but what we should remember is that changing the name of the thing does not change the thing itself.

In part, this problem derives in my view from the understandable but confusing presentation of the democratic struggle in South Africa in the language of a struggle against a special form of colonialism. It seems to me that the presentation of white people in South Africa as colonial settlers - or at least the presentation of the system of white rule in South Africa as a colonial form of power - is seriously misleading in political terms. Not only does it fly in the face of the real history of colonialism and anti-colonialism in South Africa, it also reinforces a superficial communalism based on the mutation of whites in South Africa into a 'colon' class.

The form of nationalism now being pushed to the fore in the liberation movement in an effort to overcome the 'colour-caste' or communalist associations of black nationalism, though one with a long ancestry in the liberation movement, is that the national struggle in South Africa, like say that of Italy in its *risorgimento*, is to create a new national unity in opposition to the balkanisation of the country under apartheid, to rid the country of an archaic colonial form of state and introduce in its stead a modern, representative government based on the will of the people as a whole. The liberation movement presents itself as the true patriots of South Africa, whose commitment to the genuine national interest of the South African people stands in contrast to the merely sectional interests of the present white rulers. An all-embracing South African (or Azanian) nationalism is portrayed as the resolution of racial divisions within the polity; the white rulers appear as putting their 'colonial' interests before the interests of the country as a whole; true South African nationalism seems to substitute itself for the pseudo-nationalisms of what is in reality black and white communalism.

This argument, first proselytised by Neville Alexander on the left and then increasingly appropriated within the mainstreams of the liberation movement, offers the most convincing dissociation of nationalism from the racialism of the state, though containing its own ambiguities over whether or not whites are conceived as having a place in the new South African nation. It raises, however, the political dangers and difficulties of propagating a state consciousness in the form of another kind of patriotism. It seems to me that a critique of apartheid, based on its

allegedly colonial or balkanising character and posed in the name of national unity and a national democratic state, serves only to confuse the democratic question with that of nationalism. It fails to come to terms with the functioning of apartheid as an independent capitalist state, which has adapted the political forms of colonialism to the modern imperatives of capital accumulation as successfully as the British state has adapted the feudal institutions of monarchy and the House of Lords to its contemporary needs. The problem in South Africa does not lie in the stunting of national unity and consciousness but in the suppression of democracy for the vast majority. Nationalism and democracy can and should be uncoupled.

The representation of the consciousness of the masses as spontaneously and 'naturally' nationalist - and therefore as justifying a nationalist form of political leadership - is also problematic. Too often this representation has been based on inadequate and insufficiently historical evidence. Sometimes it is derived, as it were, from first principles on the basis of deductive reasoning which does not hold up to critical scrutiny. Sometimes it is derived from selective empirical evidence, which is both partial at a given point of time and insufficiently sensitive to the dynamics of change over time. The history reveals popular support for nationalist politics, but this support has not been without its own considerable tensions, it has not been unconditional and it has varied markedly at different points of the struggle.

If in our period of investigation the high point of popular support for african nationalism was to be found in the early 1950s (around the Defiance Campaign) and then the late 1950s (around Sharpeville), we should also remember that at both these moments there were considerable conflicts manifested between the interests of the working class and the nationalist leadership. We should remember too that popular support for african nationalism was volatile: declining noticeably after Defiance and then crashing to the ground after the turn to armed struggle. The representation of the history of the South African struggle as one of continuous popular support for african nationalism is one which over-simplifies a more complex reality.

There seems to me to be evidence to support the view that black nationalism has predominantly been the ideology of the radical black intelligentsia, supported by most socialist intellectuals, and has sat uncomfortably in the ranks of the working class. Where workers themselves have organised and struggled, african nationalism and other forms of black nationalism have not found it at all easy to win ideological hegemony: witness on the one hand the difficulties which nationalists have shown in relating to the social demands, methods of class struggle and forms of democratic organisation adopted by workers in the trade union and community movements and on the other hand the non-racial, class forms of organisation which have often accompanied the mobilisations of black workers.

I do not wish to substitute one myth for another: that of a non-racial, democratic, socialist consciousness for a nationalist consciousness. I wish only to point to the dynamic, uneven and conflictual nature of popular consciousness in South Africa as revealed by the political history of the liberation struggle. The key point is that mass consciousness is not just 'there'. It is constructed by forces from below and above. To the extent that african nationalists have been the major anti-apartheid force in the country, it is not surprising to find popular support gravitating toward it. Popular consciousness is in part at least a function of political leadership and not merely its premise.

The relation between popular consciousness and political leadership should be seen dialectically: even if nationalist ways of thinking predominated among the people, the question of how the political leadership relates to nationalism is not resolved by this fact. If the consciousness of the masses were 'backward', then presumably it is the job of the leadership not merely to tail it but to lead it to something higher and more effective. The orthodox literature tends to assume not so much the hegemony of african nationalism - for the term 'hegemony' assumes a battle of ideas between competing modes of thought - but almost the exclusivity of african nationalism as the expression of popular feeling. What should be recognised instead is a plurality of ideas within a socially differentiated population and that the making of the liberation movement has been the product of many an ideological battle more or less democratically fought out.

The rise of african nationalism to a position of ideological hegemony within the liberation movement has been far more contested than usually appears in the literature and was not so much a product of its own immanent rationality (as it is so often presented) as of the defeat or absence of alternative political traditions. The development of african nationalism as a mass force in the 1950s should be understood in part as the product of external factors. The ascendancy of afrikaner nationalism to state power provided a nationalist frame in which political struggle was located. The defeat of the labour movement in the 1940s severely weakened the independent power of the working class and led to an intensified racial fragmentation. In addition there were factors at play which were internal to the liberation movement. For different reasons, the three main sections of what may broadly be called the socialist camp - the Communists, the trotskyists and the independent socialists - had all failed in the 1940s to tie themselves organically with the working class movement. Furthermore, each of these socialist camps either gravitated toward one or other nationalist perspective - african nationalism, non-european nationalism or afrikaner nationalism - as they were blown off course by the pressures of the time. Alternatively they were marginalised in the prison-house of socialist sectarianism.

The result was that instead of socialist ideas developing out of the defeats incurred in the 1940s, there were internal as well as external pressures pushing toward the assimilation of socialism to a nationalist perspective. This trajectory was then rationalised after the event as a natural progression of political consciousness and leadership. African

nationalism itself lacked both ideological coherence and an organisational base but it provided a radical and forceful political expression of the determination of black people to fight against the apartheid state and it was able to identify itself with the national liberation struggles of colonised peoples in their fight for an end to colonial rule and for the democratic right of national self-determination.

The dominant view to be found in the literature is that socialist ideas and a working class perspective on the battle for democracy in South Africa represent what we have called a 'forced abstraction' in this context. Many reasons have been given for this: the racism of white workers, the 'group prejudices' of black workers, the need for alliances outside the working class, the predominance of race over class as the source of oppression, the immediacy of the national question and so forth. This is a view shared by the mainstreams of South African socialism. My own opinion is that none of these arguments has been convincing. There is no intrinsic reason why the battle for democracy - in the workplace, the community and the government - should not have been politically led under the banner of socialism rather than under that of african nationalism. In fact there is every reason why it should in a country in which the great majority of the people are proletarianised and in which there are increasing concentrations of industrial workers capable of providing the base for such a movement. There is reason to believe that a socialist leadership based on the political independence of the working class might have provided a more consistent democratic opposition to apartheid, a more organic connection with the mass

of black people and for that reason a potentially more effective leadership of the liberation struggle.

To understand the decline of socialism as the standard bearer of popular resistance, we need to look not to its immanent irrationality in the South African context but rather to the terrible defeats suffered by the working class, which were rooted in the structural weaknesses of the working class itself, as well as to the internal deficiencies of the actually existing socialisms of the time. In the 1940s the three main currents of socialism in South Africa competing for political and ideological hegemony within the democratic movement, suffered lasting damage from the effects of the international splits in world socialism between stalinism, reformism and trotskyism. The subsumption of socialism to nationalism in South Africa was a product of the internal defects in each current of socialist thought: of the lurches from popular frontism to communist sectarianism characteristic of the official Communists for whom the defence of the Soviet state overrode the interests of the class struggle in South Africa; of the inability of the independent socialists under Solly Sachs to break fully from the traditions of white labourism; and finally of the inability of trotskyists, caught in a mechanical rendition of the theory of permanent revolution, to construct an independent working class perspective out of its critique of stalinism. In each case, but for different reasons and in different ways, these internal defects led the socialist parties themselves to abandon or suspend the banner of socialism in favour of one or other form of black nationalism. The result was that a conjunctural defeat of the

working class was turned into what was perhaps an epochal defeat for socialism.

The fundamental problem faced by socialists in South Africa lay in the separation of the democratic tasks of the liberation struggle from its economic base. The democratic question was hived off into its own distinct sphere, converted into nationalist form and reserved for political forces distinct from socialism. Meanwhile, the socialist question was buried altogether, postponed to some second stage of struggle, identified with revolutionary nationalism or posed as the exclusive goal of the revolution in contrast to that of democracy. Either anti-capitalism was disconnected from democracy or democracy from anti-capitalism. The influence of stalinist forms of socialism penetrated far beyond official Communism. There is little doubt in my own mind that what was at issue here was a crisis of socialist thought which had its origins outside of South Africa but which took a particularly damaging form inside. Images of socialism were in one way or another counterposed to rather than integrated with the achievement of democracy; its identification with the stalinist states in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was the culmination of this tendency.

The re-birth of socialist ideas and practices in the liberation struggle requires not merely the re-assertion of a given tradition, whether conceived as that of the Communist Party, trotskyism or non-racial trade unionism, but rather of the re-discovery of the roots of democratic socialism. What I have tried to do is to recover not just a sense of South

African politics as a contested terrain of competing political voices but also a silence within their midst whose subject is the working class. There are many who now pay allegiance to what is called 'the leading role of the working class'. I have tried indirectly through my history to give substance to this notion: negatively through a critique of the two traditions of liberal democracy and revolutionary romanticism whose counter-positions and strange couplings have dominated the political leadership of the liberation struggle, and positively through the twin ideas of social democracy and the proletarian reformation.

The nationalist frame, which treats the state as an alien imposition, has been strategically dis-orienting: associated on the one side with rejection of all class struggles for reform and on the other with dependency on the liberal middle classes. Rather than see the strategies of the liberation movement as progressing inexorably from one stage to another, it makes better sense to see them as moving within a paradigm which has blocked at every stage the integration of socialism and democracy. By contrast, social democracy is a movement based on the working class, at once fighting for democratic state reform and building its own democratic organisations in civil society as essential pre-conditions for the transference of power and the transition to new and more democratic forms of power. The proletarian reformation is the period of class struggle in which the working class fights for its own independent existence, recognition and space. In my own analysis of the class struggles in South Africa, these concepts have not so much provided a point of departure as a point of arrival, a counter-point to a problematic norm. They became the absent centre of my history.

Appendix 1: Town and country

In focussing on the relation between trade unions and politics, we have omitted important areas of working class organisation and resistance in the 1940s: not least the community movements in the black townships and the sporadic protests of rural workers. These sites of struggle reveal a similar relationship of the political leaders to the working class as we found in the trade union sphere, that is, putting dependency on the liberal middle classes in the form of pressure group politics before the struggle for working class independence. This may be illustrated in the case of community movements by the record of the 1943-44 Alexandra bus boycotts.

In 1943 some 15,000 residents of Alexandra walked to and from the factories and shops of Johannesburg for ten days in protest against rising fares. The government responded by appointing a commission of inquiry and pegged fares pending the report. For the ANC Dr Xuma declared that the settlement was a 'great victory' and that the exemplary behaviour of the residents had won great sympathy (1). Similarly for the CPSA *Inkululeko* claimed that the strike had been concluded with a complete victory for the residents (2). The moratorium on the boycott during the deliberations of the Commission appeared as a victory since, as one commentator has put it, 'a settlement won by orderly and punctually terminated protest could serve to emphasise the responsibility of African political organisations' (3).

When the Commission reported, it admitted that 'the vast bulk of the African workers... were in 1943 unable from their own earnings, even when supplemented by the earnings of other members of the family, to meet the minimum requirements of subsistence, health and decency' (4). Yet it endorsed an increase in fares. In 1944, some seven months after the commission had published its findings, the bus fares were increased and were again met with a mass bus boycott. By this time a new political organisation, the African Democratic Party, had been formed in response to the perceived inability of the CPSA and ANC to lead this level of urban working class militancy. The CPSA recognised one half of this problem when it wrote of the formation of the ADP that 'this party could not have been born if the Congress leaders had organised the people, mobilised them in millions... The African people have been frustrated by a Congress leadership which does not organise mass support nor carry on mass action to improve their living standards' (5). In placing the blame on the ANC, however, the Communist Party did not review its own role. The ADP was committed to what it called a 'middle position', rejecting the extremes of the 'method of revolt' and the 'policy of appeasement', and adopting in their stead 'the method of peaceful revolution' (6). This was defined as 'the method of the strike used as the weapon of trade unions throughout the world - it is the method of mass protests and mass demonstrations'.

The second bus boycott faced severe police action. Emergency powers were used to break the boycott by banning any gathering of more than 15 persons in any demonstration connected with the boycott and the transport board prosecuted sympathisers giving lifts. In response it was decided at a

meeting of over 5000 residents of Alexandra that they would continue to walk, but in small groups. In December the co-ordinating body of the boycotters, the Workers Transport Action Committee, attempted to extend the boycott to Orlando where rail fares had been increased. Political groups were divided on the desirability of this escalation of the action. The Communist Party advised against calling on Orlando to join the boycott, on the grounds that Orlando was not organised and the Orlando people had already bought their train tickets. The ADP on the other hand supported the local committee and attempted to call out Orlando, but the police dispersed a meeting organised for the purpose of picketing the station and arrested the leaders. Orlando did not walk but the ADP captured the Orlando Advisory Board at the elections shortly after the bus strike ended, thus outvoting the CPSA who had previously had a majority on the board. (7)

Left wing militants from the Action Committee then sought to couple the bus boycott with a sit-down strike or stay-away organised in the community. This would have had the general advantage of linking trade union and community action and the specific advantage of relating to the exhaustion of the walkers. In response liberal white opinion began to perceive the boycott as a threat and withdraw their sympathy. For example, Paul Evenault of the Institute for Race Relations wrote that whilst the boycott 'had been an orderly movement, a mass movement of which any body of responsible citizens might be provoked into for many reasons, there had been a feeling that any incident might occur to turn an orderly protest into a violent one. Indeed the possibility of a sit-down strike seemed to indicate a drift toward desperate action' (8).

From within the labour movement CNETU in line with its overall policy recommended the postponement of the projected strike. As the boycott nonetheless threatened to escalate, the City Council backed down and decided to subsidise the transport industry to an amount sufficient to absorb the fare increases for three months. After some argument over the terms of the agreement, which were opposed by left-wing activists, the Action Committee called the boycott off. The ANC and CPSA claimed a significant victory, which it was, but it was also evidence that direct working class action or the threat of it could win concessions that the politicians found so hard to come by through their constitutional methods. The African Democratic Party, the political embodiment of popular discontent with the role of the ANC-CPSA alliance in the black communities, itself soon split, some of its members moving to the left to help form the trotskyist Workers International League and others like Hymie Basner moving back into CPSA-ANC circles.

The relation of the political leadership to agrarian protest revealed the same form of limitation. We have seen that the great majority of africans in the 1940s were still located on the land. There was a diminishing but not insubstantial class of african peasants located in the reserves and to a lesser extent on 'white' land; and there was a huge class of rural proletarians working as wage labourers or labour tenants on white farms. Although sharp divisions existed between relatively advanced urban workers and desperately backward rural workers, working class links between town and country were forged in practice by the oscillating movements of migrant workers. It was a two way process which allowed the worker to reproduce the

traditionalist outlook of the indigenous african communities and for the rural african communities to be permeated with the outlook of the urban worker (9). Thus the rural revolt among the Zoutpansberg Balemi reservists in 1943-44 against stock culling and 'rehabilitation' was centered around an informal urban cultural association formed among Balemi migrant workers and informed by the political education received by urban leaders like Alpheus Maliba, in his case with the Communist Party (10). Conversely, the 1946 african miners' strike was in large measure organised around informal ethnic associations rooted in the countryside (11).

The problem for the political leadership was not so much to create links between town and country, for these were forged organically by the migration of labour, but rather to give them political expression. What the historical literature emphasises first and foremost is that the political leadership generally had little relation in this period to popular resistance in the countryside. According to Walshe, at least until 1952 the ANC encountered 'virtually insurmountable difficulties in extending its activities to the rural areas' (12). Similarly Alan Brooks has commented on the Communist Party that prior to 1950 'the failure of the party to attract peasants may have been partly a failure of the party to attempt to attract peasants' (13). Some militants like I.B. Tabata, Govan Mbeki and Alpheus Maliba, associated on the whole with organisations affiliated to the Non-European Unity Movement, did make contact with the resistance of oppressed peasants in the reserves of Transkei and the Northern Transvaal and posed demands for such democratic rights as security of tenure and cattle

ownership and the lifting of racial restrictions on the purchase and sale of land.

In so far as the land question was addressed by the politicians - as ever the Unity Movement inverted the Communist Party's neglect of the agrarian question by magnifying it into the 'alpha and omega' of the liberation struggle - it was treated as in essence a peasant question. As Tabata put it, those who would acquaint themselves with the land question 'must learn to know how to approach the peasant and... draw the landless peasantry into the movement' (14). The Ten Point Programme of the Non-European Unity Movement reflected this view. Its paragraph on land read as follows:

Relations of serfdom at present existing on the land must go, together with the Land Act, together with restrictions upon acquiring land. (15)

For the future, the NEUM looked forward to 'a new division of land in conformity with the existing population living on the land and working the land'. What these vague words meant - about how the land was to be re-divided and what arrangements were to be made once the land had been re-divided - was debated over the years within the NEUM and were in 1958 to become the cause of a major split within the movement. The left version was for an 'equitable distribution' in which land would be nationalised and occupation allocated to individual peasants. The right version was for the rugged individualism of 'kulakisation', that is, the lawful purchase of land within the bounds of capitalist society but without racial restriction. Both versions either treated the existing rural population as given or sought to increase it at the expense of the urban dweller. Neither

version addressed the proletarianised farm labourer or the problems involved in dividing concentrated capitalist farms into individual plots. Neither addressed that part of the solution to the land problem which africans voted for with their feet despite all the obstacles put in their way, that is, their exodus to the urban areas and the reduction of the ratio of people in the country to those in the town (16).

The juridic, exclusively peasant view was expressed equally by Dr Xuma when he declared in his Presidential Address to the ANC in December 1941 that 'in all this land policy the worst and most dangerous clause is the restriction that provided that no Native may buy land from a non-Native' (17). The radical Youth League did not break from this peasant perspective, speaking only of a 'fair distribution of land' among africans but not of the requirements of the rural proletarian. The Fourth International (FIOISA) stressed that 'reserve dwellers are in fact tribal proletarians and the centre of their livelihood lies in the towns and cities' and that 'even their peasant outlook is steadily being changed into a proletarian one' (18), but it too does not appear to have taken on board the rural proletarian.

The democratic rights of the minority of peasants were an essential aspect of the agrarian question but so too were the democratic rights of far larger numbers of farm labourers: to trade union organisation, legal protection from servile conditions, minimum wages, freedom of movement and co-operative enterprises. In the party programmes the particular rights and

needs of the two and a half million or so african farmworkers, the mass of the downtrodden rural proletariat, were omitted from the picture. The world of the peasantry, with its demand for the emancipation of private property from racial restriction, was super-imposed upon the agrarian question in general. The world of the rural proletariat, with its demand for protection from the effects of capitalist private property, was pushed into the background. What was at issue here was not democracy versus socialism but rather what form of democratic struggle: one led by the working class or one led by the middle classes and permeated with the individualism of the peasant mind without the support of a peasant mass.

Ch. 1: Preface: Nationalism, socialism and democracy. Footnotes

1. Marx (1977), p. 150
2. Marx (1977), p. 174
3. Marx (1967), p. 214
4. See for example Slovo (1977), Simons (1983), Roux (1964), Lerumo (1980), Benson (1966), Bunting (1975), Wolpe (1972), Legassick (1974), etc. See Nolutshungu (1982), pp. 198-199 for an unorthodox and creative defence of the integration of revolutionary nationalism and socialism in South Africa: 'The mode of domination in South Africa... establishes an interest for all Blacks in the removal of the structures of domination. Nationalism expresses that interest - directed as it is primarily against the ideological and political terms of the reproduction of capital... Although it is perfectly true to say that the ultimate interests of the black workers and the black 'middle class' are different and contradictory, it does not follow that the area of common opposition to the state form may not produce a struggle that is revolutionary - undermining the existing political and ideological supports of capitalism without being able to establish alternative ones... It is in this sense that a nationalist movement can be revolutionary in a Marxist sense'.
5. Hobsbawm (1989), p. 125
6. Simons (1983), p. 609
7. Slovo (1977), p. 139
8. Wolpe (1988), pp. 31-33
9. *ibid.*, p. 52
10. See Slovo (1989), *passim*
11. Alexander (1979), p. 178
12. *ibid.*, p. 176
13. *ibid.*, p. 178
14. Slovo (1977), pp. 116-7
15. Slovo (1989), p. 5
16. For three political variants of the self-same position see Moses Kotane in SACP (1981), pp. 231-41, I B Tabata in Karis and Carter 2 p. 378 and Africanist July 1959
17. See Alexander (1979), ch.s 1, 2 and 4.

18. A very stimulating historical discussion of these issues is to be found in Marks and Trapido (1987). They analyse national identities within a four or five nation framework as socially constructed products of a historical process of struggle involving both external separation from other nations and internal unification of the nation across social divisions. They write: 'It is not often realised how recent 'national' identifications in South Africa are... Both black and white nationalism can in large measure be seen as responses to late nineteenth century industrialisation, imperialism and British "race patriotism"... For all the peoples of South Africa, new ethnic identities emerged around 1910 when the state was being constructed as a single entity out of the British colonies, the conquered Afrikaner republics and African kingdoms in the region. That this unification did not lead to a single pan-South African, pan-ethnic nationalism was the outcome of a history of regional divisions, the racism and social Darwinism of the late nineteenth century and the specific political-cum-class struggles which were being legitimated by the discourse of nationalism'. (pp.2-3).
 19. Slovo (1977), pp.171-175
 20. For a critique of the theory of internal colonialism see Wolpe (1974) and his revised views (1988); Alexander (1979), pp. 105-111; Freund (1986); Hudson (1986); Alexander (1986)
 21. Hobsbawm (1989), pp.119-121
 22. Nairn (1975)
 23. Breuilly (1985), ch. 16
 24. Alexander (1979). p.178
 25. I am indebted to discussions with Martin Thomas and Clive Bradley for developing these points much further than I have here.
 26. There is a tendency toward this kind of reductionism in the recent writings of Baruch Hirson; see his 'South African Battleground' in Azania Worker, 1988.
 27. Quoted from Marxisme and monde musulman, Paris, 1972 in Hobsbawm (1989), p. 140.
 28. Quoted from M. N. Roy Memoirs, Bombay 1964, *ibid*.
 29. Slovo (1977), p.120
 30. Alexander (1983), p. 50
 31. See Slovo (1989), pp.3-4 and African Communist, 104
 32. Slovo (1989) writes for example: 'By rejecting class alliances and going it alone, the working class would in fact be surrendering the leadership of the national struggle to the upper and middle strata... It is necessary to maximise the forces which can be mobilised against the ruling class... The working class must work with and provide leadership to our
- Ch. 1 A Question of Method: footnotes

youth, women, intellectuals, small traders, peasants, the rural poor and - yes - even the racially dominated black bourgeoisie... When a front is created the working class does not just melt into it... The overwhelming majority of the people are working class... But the ANC should clearly not adopt a socialist platform... If it adopted such a programme it would destroy its character as the prime representative of all the classes among the oppressed black majority'. The definition of the working class and the dividing line between it and the rest of the black people is very unclear in these passages.

33. *ibid.*, pp. 13-14

34. *ibid.*, p. 15

35. *ibid.*, p. 14

36. *ibid.*, p. 13

37. For an elaboration of the method behind this critique, see Fine (1984)

38. O'Meara (1975a)

39. Slovo (1977), p. 167

40. *ibid.*, pp. 179-180

41. *ibid.*

42. Guerin (1946)

43. Engels (1969), p. 10

44. *ibid.*

45. *ibid.*, p. 11

46. See ANC (1969) and Wolpe (1984)

47. See Wolpe (1984), its critique in Davis and Fine (1986) and Wolpe's rejoinder (1988). Wolpe criticises us for explaining the strategies of the liberation movement only by reference to the class character of the movement and without reference to 'the social forces involved and the structural conditions within which the contests between them are occurring'. If this error was committed in the past, every effort has been made to remedy it here.

48. See Lipton (1985)

49. See for example Johnstone (1976), p. 4; Wolpe (1972), p. 425; Legassick (1972); ANC (n.d.), p. 3; Wolpe (1988), p. 31.

50. See Fine (1984), pp. 95 ff

51. See Legassick (1974) for a fine class analysis in this mode.
Ch. 1 A Question of Method: footnotes

52. O'Meara (1983), p. 232
53. Saul and Gelb (1981), pp. 13-14
54. O'Meara (1983), p. 246
55. See Lipton (1985)
56. See Legassick (1976) for a good historical example of this mode of analysis. The debates around the Wiehahn reforms of labour law in 1979-81 are an interesting instance of the problem of relating to state reform. See Maree (1987), pp. 170-207 and Fine et al. (1981)
57. See for example Karl Kautsky's The Class Struggle, passim.
58. See Trotsky (1973), p. 180.

Ch. 2 Industry and Black Labour

1. Sachs (1965), p.174
2. Legassick (1974)
3. Saul and Gelb (1981) and O'Meara (1983)
4. Jon Lewis (1983)
5. Legassick (1973); Grossman (1985) and Witz (1987)
6. Johnstone (1979)
7. Bradford (1976 and 1987)
8. Bonner (1979)
9. Harries (1981), Hirson (1986), Stein (1978)
10. Jon Lewis ((1984)
11. O'Meara (1973), p.146
12. Stein (1982) and Lewis (1984)
13. Clark (1962)
14. Stein (1981); Hirson (1986); Padayachee (1985)
15. O'Meara (1975a); Stein (1982)
16. Stadler (1981 and 1983); Hellman (1949); Hirson (1986)
17. Hirson (1986); Stadler (1979)
18. Sapire (1987)
19. Webster (1985); Stein (1980)
20. Hirson (1986) and Harries (1981)
21. Du Toit (1976), p. 38
22. Botha Commission 46 62/51 para 1500
23. Revolutionary Communist August 1945
24. Minutes of the TUC, Archives of the TUC SA/Microfilm Collection
25. Union of South Africa, Union Statistics for Fifty Years (1960), section L; Kaplan (1977); Innes (1984)

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26. Freund (1985), pp. 15 ff.; Koen (1979), pp. 1-20; Board of Trade and Industries Report 282, Investigation into Manufacturing Industries in the Union of South Africa (1945)
27. Freund (1985), pp. 16
28. *ibid.*
29. Union of South Africa (1948, 1951, 1960); Houghton (1973); O'Meara (1975)
30. Union Statistics for 50 Years (1960); Natrass (1981)
31. Native Laws Commission (1948), pp. 5-19
32. Jordaan (1959), pp. 25-27
33. 1930-32 Native Economic Commission, cited in Koen (1979), p. 26
34. 1937-38 Report of the Native Affairs Commission, cited in Koen (1979), pp. 27-8
35. Economic Planning Council Report, No. 9, 1946; 44, Para 173
36. Native Laws Commission 1946-48; 15, para 21.
37. Union Statistics for 50 Years (1960), A-33
38. Legassick and De Clercq (1982); Innes (1984)
39. Freund (1985), p. 8; Hirson (1986), p. 43
40. See for instance Belinda Bozoli's fascinating study of capitalist ideology in South Africa (1981)
41. Hirson (1986), pp. 44-46
42. See Hellman (1948); Gibson (1954); Clark (1962); Hirson (1986), pp. 44-50
43. See Posel (1983)
44. See for example Legassick (1976)
45. Stein (1978) and Hirson (1986)
46. Union of South Africa (1937), pp. 3-4
47. Botha Commission paper 1474
48. *ibid.*
49. Harries (1981), p. 10
50. Cape Times, 22 Jan 1942
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51. Union of South Africa (1942)
52. Umteteti wa Bantu, 14 June 1941
53. The Guardian, 4 June 1942
54. Rand Daily Mail, 27 March 1942
55. As was later to be the case after the Wiehahn reforms of trade union law in 1980
56. Stein (1981)
57. *ibid.*
58. *ibid.*, p. 4
59. Union of South Africa (1942)
60. Fagan Commission, UG 28/47
61. Industrial Conciliation (Native) Bill (1947), Government Gazette 16/5/47
62. Inkululeko, June 1947
63. Forum, December 1945
64. The Forum 3 Aug 1947, cited in Lewsen (1988), p. 115
65. Cited in Lewsen, *op. cit.*, p. 114
66. Inkundla Ya Bantu 17 March 1945
67. Hirson (1986), p. 155
68. Stein (1981), p. 5
69. Statement of the African Gas and Power Workers Union, Hemson Microfilm
70. Union of South Africa (1944), Report of the Witwatersrand Mine Native Wages Commission UGC 21/44 para 522
71. Cited in Stein (1981), p. 8
72. The story is told by Hirson (1986), pp. 159-162
73. Inkululeko, Sept 1944
74. Cited in Stein (1982), pp. 96-7 and Hirson (1986), p. 161
75. Hoover Inst. Microfilm
76. Inkululeko 10 July 1943
Ch. 2 Industry and Black Labour: footnotes

77. Basner unpub Manuscript (ICS London)
78. Lansdown Report UG 21/1944 para. s 211-12
79. Inkululeko, 28 July 1945
80. Inkululeko 10 March 1945
81. Inkululeko 9 June 1945
82. *ibid.*
83. Transvaal Chamber of Mines Annual Report (1945), p. 26, cited in Koen (1979), p. 162
84. *ibid.* p.163
85. Diamond (1969), pp.214-15
86. Simons (1983), p. 573
87. Freedom, 1 & 2, April 1947
88. J B Marks, Interview with Sheridan Johns, April 1964, on Carter-Karis microfilm Reel 12 B
89. Star, 15 Aug 1946
90. Mokgatle (1971) pp.251-2
91. Stein (1981), p.6
92. See for example Padayachee (1985)
93. See Stein (1981) for various instances of corruption and Lewis (1984) for ATUTAC
- 94 Union of South Africa (1951)

Ch. 3 Labour and politics: the people's front

1. See Simons (1983); Roux (1964); Lerumo (1980); Slovo (1977); Bunting (1975); Brooks (1967); Spence (1970); Legassick (1973) and Grossman (1985) for histories of the Communist Party of South Africa.
2. See Roux (1964), pp.255 ff; Grossman (1985); Legassick (1973)
3. I have been influenced in this analysis in particular by Draper (1985) and (1957). See also Claudin (1975) and Grossman (1985)
4. *ibid.*
5. Speech by Stalin on American Communism, delivered on May 6 1929 and published in *Bolshevik*, No. 1, 1930, p. 8; cited in Trotsky (1982), p. 23
6. Trotsky (1982), pp. 23-26
7. This was true of members of most official Communist Parties around the world.
8. See Umbsebenzi 27 June 1936 and 11 July 1937; and Southall (1978), pp.67-68
9. See Southall (1978) and Grossman (1985)
10. Cited in Grossman (1985), p. 284
11. Umbsebenzi, 26 Oct 1935
12. See Grossman (1985), p.298
13. Mokgatle (1971), p.211
14. Dimitrov, quoted in Claudin (1975), p. 300
12. Guardian 22 Sept 1939?
13. 'Socialism for Africa', The Call, 1941, Hoover Inst Microfilm?
14. Freedom, Jan 1941
15. See Carter-Karis Microfilm 3A/2cc1/140
16. Cope (n.d.), pp.331-3
17. Carter and Karis, Vol.2, p. 84
18. Hoover Inst. Microfilm, Reel 5
19. CPSA: 'The Communist Party policy on the war now', Aug 1940, Hoover Inst. Microfilm

20. Carter-Karis Microfilm Reel 3A 2ccl/14A
21. Quoted in Hirson (1986), p. 237
22. Mokgatle (1971), p. 212
23. Freedom April 1942
24. Statement of the Executive Committee of the CPSA (1943), Carter-Karis Microfilm 3A 62/1
25. CPSA, 'More Money', (1942), Hoover Inst Microfilm
26. Guardian, 29 Jan 1942
27. CPSA, 'Communists Plan for Victory', Hoover Inst Microfilm
28. Untitled, Hoover Inst Microfilm
29. H Morkel, 'Why we must support the government in the war against fascism', Freedom (n.d.), Hoover Inst Microfilm
30. Quoted in Mbeki (1981), p. 23
31. A B Xuma, 'Bridging the gap between black and white in South Africa', quoted in Mbeki (1981), pp. 68-69
32. Race Relations News, June 1939, cited in Mbeki (1981), p. 8
33. Tabata (1974)
34. See Walshe (1970), pp.276ff; Karis and Carter, Vol. 2, part 2
35. Xuma Papers, ABX 42 1229
36. *ibid.*, ABX 45080/d
37. Findlay, 'On the United Fronts', Freedom, Dec 1945
38. CPSA, 'More money', 1942, Hoover Inst. Microfilm
39. Hirson (1986), p.284
40. See Grossman (1985), pp.435 ff
41. Rivonia Trial Microfilm Collection, Reel 3
42. Karis and Carter, 2, p. ?
43. Walshe (1976), p.281
44. *ibid.*, p. 349
45. Karis and Carter, 2, p. 94
Ch. 3 Labour and Politics: The People's Front: footnotes

46. Walshe (1976), p. 282 ff
47. *ibid.*
48. *ibid.*
49. Karis and Carter, 2, p. 262

Ch. 4 Labour and politics: the left opposition

1. Carter-Karis Microfilm, Reel 3a A 2. cci:32. Baruch Hirson is the foremost historian of the trotskyist movement in this period, he himself having been an activist within it. His historical writings are a very fine example of the trotskyist tradition. There is, however, a tension in his work between an acute historical appreciation of the under-development of the black working class in the 1940s - the white workers' movement has no place in his analysis - and a tendency to idealise its revolutionary potential. He then sees the Communist Party as having been the major obstacle to the realisation of this potential. This tension surfaces methodologically in Hirson's attempt to integrate the socialist humanism of E.P. Thompson with and an 'orthodox' trotskyist analysis of the betrayal committed by stalinism.

2. *ibid.*

3. Provisional Committee of Militant Trade Unions: 'Workers: a call for a left wing in the trade unions', 1945

4. Socialist Action, Sept 1945

5. *ibid.*

6. Revolutionary Communist, August 1945

7. Socialist Action, August 1945

8. *ibid.*

9. Revolutionary Communist, Aug 1945

10. See Southall (1979)

11. Trotsky (1971), pp.250-251

12. Workers Voice, 1 Feb 1936

13. Southall, *op.cit.*

14. Trotsky, *op. cit.*

15. Quoted in Southall (1979)

16. H Jaffe: 'Critique of the WIL', 1945

17. Socialist Action, Feb 1946

18. *ibid.*

19. Karis and Carter, 2, p. 350

20. *ibid.*, p.342

Ch. 4 Labour and Politics: The Left Opposition: footnotes

21. *ibid.*, p.356
22. *ibid.*, p.354
23. *ibid.*
24. *ibid.*, p.383
25. Marx (1975), pp.327-9
26. Mbeki (1981), p.81. A very challenging 'internal' critique of the liberal middle class tradition of the ANC is offered by Mbeki. Like many left commentators, however, he roots what he sees as the divorce of the political leadership from the masses in the socio-cultural elitism of the african middle class as represented by the ANC, but without analysing the crucial role played by the Communist Party in buttressing and shaping this political approach.
27. Nairn: 'The modern Janus' (1975), p.18
28. Breuilly (1985)
29. Karis and Carter, 2, p.306
30. Mandela (1983), p.26
31. Karis and Carter, 2, p.318

Ch. 5 Black Workers and the White Labour Movement: footnotes

1. See Simons (1983)
2. O'Meara (1975b), pp. 37, 38, 50
3. Davies (1973), p. 362 and (1979), p. 261
4. See Jon Lewis (1984); Webster (1983) and (1985); O'Meara (1983)
5. Botha Commission UG 62/51, p. 25
6. Sachs (1965), p. 172
7. *ibid.*, p. 173
8. Lewis (1984), p. 156
9. Stein (1980)
10. Star, Dec 1942
11. Quoted in Stein (1982); see Hirson (1986), p. 150
12. Strike bulletins of the Building Workers Industrial Union, personal copy
13. Lewis (1984), p. 162
14. Simons (1983), p. 561
15. Cohen (1939)
16. See Sachs (1957); Lewis (1976); Berger (1987); Witz (1987)
17. Witz (1987), p. 262 , from The Garment Worker May-June 1947
18. *ibid.*, p. 264
19. *ibid.*, p. 282
20. Trek, June 1947
21. Sachs (1965), pp. 49-51
22. Inkululeko, 31 July 1943
23. Lewis (1984), p. 72
24. *ibid.*, p. 162
25. *ibid.*, p. 160
26. Harries (1981)
27. See Hirson (1986), pp. 157-159; Lewis (1984), pp. 159-166; Stein (1980)
Ch. 5 Black Workers and the White Labour Movement: footnotes

Ch.7 The turn to mass struggle: footnotes

1. O'Meara (1983), p. 249
2. Lazar (1988), p. 4
3. Stein (1980)
4. Moroney (1976)
5. Lodge (1983), p. 58
6. Walker (1982), p. 130
7. Lewis (1987), pp. 245 ff and Goldin (1987)
8. The Guardian 28/6/51
9. Fridjhon (1976)
10. Marks & Trapido (1987)
11. Karis and Carter 2, pp 337-9
12. 'Nationalism and the Class Struggle', extract from the Central Committee Report to the national conference of the Communist Party in Johannesburg, 6-8 Jan 1950, in SACP (1981), pp. 200-211
13. *ibid.*, p. 205
14. *ibid.*, p. 208
15. *ibid.*, p. 209
16. *ibid.*
17. *ibid.*, p. 211
18. SACP (1981), p. 200
19. Karis and Carter 2, p. 441
20. *ibid.*, p. 447
21. Lambert (1979)
22. See Hirson (1961), Webster (1981) and Lambert (1979)
23. Central Committee statement read out in the House of Assembly, 20/6/50, by the MP Sam Kahn, SACP (1981), p. 214

24. The 1962 Programme of the SACP (1981), *ibid.*, p. 310
25. Simons (1983), p. 156
26. Bunting (1975), p. 172
27. Lerumo (1980), p. 81
28. Bunting (1975), p. 174
29. Kahn v Louw 1951 (2), SA 194 (c)
30. SACP (1981), p. 217
31. Hirson (1988), p. 101; Karis and Carter 2, pp. 410 ff; Lodge (1983), pp. 42ff.
32. Jo Slovo: 'The Congress of the People', Liberation, 10, 1954
33. Report of the Joint Planning Committee of the ANC and SAIC 8/11/51, in Karis and Carter 2, p. 464.
34. Kuper (1956), p. 43. See also Drum October 1952
35. The text is in Karis and Carter 2, pp. 480-481
36. Cited in Kuper (1956), pp. 235-9
37. See Grossman (1985), pp. 461 ff
38. Lukacs (1971), pp. 256 ff
39. ANC (1969)
40. See Albert Lutuli: 'The Road to Freedom is Via the Cross', Karis and Carter 2, pp. 486-9
41. See Drum, October 1952, Carter (1971) and Lodge (1983) pp. 46-7
42. 'Police shootings must stop', Flyer issued by the NAC, November 1952, in Karis and Carter 2 pp. 485-6
43. See Hirson (1987)
44. Mogkatle (1971), p. 307
45. see Karis and Carter 3, pp. 6-7
46. Cited in Hirson (1987) from Carter and Karis, CAMP Microfilm Reel 12A

47. Spark, 27/2/1953
48. Viewpoints and Perspectives, 1, 1, 13 (1953)
49. *ibid.*
50. Mandela (1977), pp. 106-7
51. Cited in Hirson (1987), p. 20

Ch.8 Re-structuring the liberation movement: footnotes

1. Viewpoints and Perspectives, 2, 1953
2. *ibid.*, p. 10
3. *ibid.*, p. 14
4. See Claudin (1975), Birchall (1975), Spriano (1985), Jenkins (1979)
5. Cited in Hudson (1986)
6. *ibid.*, p. 19
7. *ibid.*, p. 18
8. Karis and Carter 3 pp. 158-9
9. The text is in Hoover Institute Microfilm
10. Karis and Carter 3 , p. 38
11. *ibid.*
12. Everatt (1987)
13. Information based on interviews
14. Karis and Carter 3 p. 69
15. The Citizen 13/8/56
16. Walker (1982) p. 262
17. FSAW: 'Report of the First National Conference of Women', *ibid.* p. 153
18. *ibid.* p. 142
19. *ibid.* p. 156
20. *ibid.* p. 157
21. *ibid.* p. 171
22. Bunting (1975), p. 201
23. Karis and Carter 3 p. 12
24. Matthews (1981) p. 176
25. Advance 8/5/54
26. Everatt (1987), p. 16

27. Suttner and Cronin (1985), p. 86
28. *ibid.*, p. 207
29. Lodge (1983), p. 72
30. New Age 24/3/55
31. New Age 3/2/55
32. Carter-Karis Microfilm 2 DC 15.44 / 2-21
33. Directive 3 3/5/55, *ibid.* 2 DC 15/4:45/2
34. Lutuli (1978), p. 141
35. Carter-Karis Microfilm 2 DC 15/4:62/1
36. SAIRR Archives AD 1812; E4.1.1.14
37. International Herald Tribune 16/7/85
38. See Karis and Carter 3 p. 93
39. SACP (1981), p. 241
40. Liberation, 11/3/1955
- 41.
42. SAIRR Archives AD 1812; EG6.4.2
43. Advance 13/4/55
44. Suttner and Cronin (1985) p. 49
45. Karis and Carter 3 p. 191
46. *ibid.*, p. 71
47. *ibid.*
48. SAIRR Archives HO1189
49. Everatt (1987)
50. Robertson (), p. 166
51. Karis and Carter 3 p. 72
52. Everatt (1987) p. 21
53. *ibid.*, p. 23

54. The Africanist July 1959
55. Moses Kotane: 'South Africa's Way Forward', Advance 6/5/54 and 13/5/54
56. Cited in Davidson (1974), p.273-4
57. *ibid.*
58. Karl Marx: 'Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State', Colletti (1975)
59. New Age, 17/11/55
60. 'In our lifetime', Liberation June 1956, reprinted in Karis and Carter 3 p.246
61. Counter-Attack (date unknown) 1959, Hoover Institute Microfilm
62. Walker (1982)
63. *ibid.* p. 182
64. *ibid.*
65. See Innes and O'Meara (1976)
66. Report of the NEC of the ANC to the Annual Conference Dec 1955, in Karis and Carter 3 pp. 228-30

Ch. 4 The revival of the working class movement: footnotes

1. Innes (1984), ch. 7
2. Jon Lang (1986), pp. 388-402
3. Houghton (1973), p. 184
4. These figures are from the Annual Surveys of Race Relations, the Bureau of Census and Statistics, and Horrell (1961)
5. Mbeki (1981), p. 100
6. Luckhardt and Wall (1980) p. 114
7. Karis and Carter 3 p. 54
8. Department of Labour Annual Reports
9. Industrial Censuses in Houghton and Dagut (1973), p. 217
10. New Age, 28/11/57
11. See Bonner and Lambert (1987) pp. 336-362
12. Bunting (1959) p. 24
13. Luckhardt and Wall (1980) p. 223
14. New Age 28/11/57
15. Bunting (1959) p. 24
16. See Stein (1980)
17. Ray Alexander, Report to the 1949 Industrial Legislation Commission, cited in Stein (1980), p. 23
18. The role of Elizabeth Mafekeng was especially noted.
19. Union Head Office Circular, cited in Stein (1980), p. 27
20. Luckhardt and Wall (1980) p. 112
21. Levy (1961) p. 39
22. See Horrell (1961) and Feit (1975)
23. Quoted in Luckhardt and Wall (1980) p. 97

Ch. 4 The revival of the working class movement: footnotes

24. *ibid.*
25. *ibid.* p. 332
26. See Lambert (1984)
27. From an interview quoted in Luckhardt and Wall (1980), p. 124
28. *ibid.*
29. *ibid.* p. 122
30. Lambert (1983) p. 31
31. *ibid.* p. 32
32. *ibid.* p. 33
33. *ibid.* ?
34. Luckhardt and Wall (1980) p. 120
35. Hoover Institute Microfilm
36. Stein (1980)
37. Luckhardt and Wall (1980) p. 124
38. *ibid.* p. 143
39. *ibid.* p. 141
40. See Lambert (1978), Webster (1981), Hirson (1961), Luckhardt and Wall (1980)
41. Hirson (1961) p. 10
42. Lodge (1983) p. 194
43. Karis and Carter 3 p. 282
44. Address by Lutuli at the 1954 ANC conference, Carter-Karis Microfilm Collection, Reel 8A
45. New Age 13/2/58
46. Presidential address at the 1957 ANC conference, Feit (1975) p. 108
47. New Age 3/4/58
48. Africa South 3 2 Jan-March 1959

Ch. 6 The revival of the working class movement: footnotes

49. New Age 3/4/58
50. New Age 6/3/58
51. Quoted in Lambert (1979) p. 15
52. Lambert (1979) p. 16
53. Luckhardt and Wall (1980) p. 354
54. New Age 3/4/58
55. 'A message to every voter from the ANC' signed by Lutuli, Karis and Carter 3 pp. 426-7
56. Natal Mercury 15/4/58, quoted in Lambert (1979), p. 20
57. Luckhardt and Wall (1980) p. 354
58. *ibid.*
59. Torch 18/3/58
60. New Age 17/4/58
61. Rand Daily Mail 18/4/58
62. Karis and Carter 3 p. 284
63. Lambert (1979) pp21-22
64. Report of the NEC of the ANC to the Annual Conference Dec 1958, Karis and Carter 3 pp 435 ff.
65. *ibid.* pp. 439-440
66. New Age 17/4/58
67. New Age 8/5/58
68. Liberation 32, 14 Aug pp11-12
69. *ibid.*
70. Interview of Arenstein in Lambert (1979), p. 22
71. Analysis 2 & 3, 1958
72. Hirson (1961) p. 11
73. See Hirson (1961a) p. 13 for a counter-argument

74. Analysis 3 1958
75. Joseph (1986), p. 12
76. See Wells (1982)
77. Joseph (1958), p. 29
78. Bernstein (1978), p. 47
79. Fairbairn (1958), p. 37 and see Hooper (1960)
80. Benson (1966) p. 196
81. Fairbairn (1958) p. 38
82. Walker (1982) p. 221
83. Wells (1982) p. 334
84. Nala (1987) p. 103
85. Walker (1982) p. 222
86. *ibid.*, p. 229
87. *ibid.*, p. 196
88. *ibid.*
89. *ibid.*, p. 225
90. Joseph (1958) p. 31
91. Mphahlele (1957) p. 60
92. Lodge (1983) p. 176
93. Mokonyane (1979)
94. *ibid.*, p. 38
95. Hirson (1961) p. 10
96. Lutuli (1978) p. 157
97. Lutuli (1978) p. 158
98. Lodge (1983) p. 167, from New Age 4 April 1957
99. Mokonyane (1979) p, 73

100. *ibid.* p. 75

101. First (1957)

Ch. 10 The crisis of political leadership: footnotes

1. Brian Bunting: 'The Problems of the Multi-Racial Conference', Liberation (date unknown), p. 6
2. Jo Matthews: 'Building a United Front', Liberation, Nov 1956, p. 19
3. Liberation, 31, 1958 p. 5
4. W. Sisulu: 'South Africa's Struggle for Democracy', Africa South (reference missing), p. 31
5. Quoted in The Citizen 5/9/57
6. Africa South, op. cit. p. 30
7. Jo Matthews: 'Uncompromising Struggle for the Freedom Charter', Liberation, 38, 1959 pp. 15-20
8. Liberation, Sept 1957
9. Liberation, 27 Sept 1957 p. 6
10. Africa South, 3, 3, 1959, pp. 12-17
11. Africa South 3, 3, 1959 pp. 12-17
12. Liberation 27 Sept 1957 pp. 1-3
13. Africa South, 3, 1, Oct-Dec 1958 p. 55
14. *ibid.*
15. Hoover Institute Microfilm
16. Drum, December 1958
17. Robert Sobukwe, Speech to the Africanist National Convention 4/4/59, in Karis and Carter 3 pp. 510-17
18. *ibid.*
19. *ibid.*
20. Manifesto of the Africanist Movement, in Karis and Carter 3 pp. 517-24
21. The Africanist (date unknown)

22. The Africanist July 1959
23. Madzunya, 'Clarion Call to the Nation', Hoover Inst Microfilm
24. The Africanist, Dec 1959
25. *ibid.*
26. Lodge (1983) p. 84
27. See Trehwela (1988a) and (1988b) for a revealing critique of Padmore.
28. See Lodge (1983) pp. 39-40 and G Lewis (1987)
29. Zayed Gamiet: 'A Critical Analysis of "A Declaration to the People of South Africa from the NEUM", Forum Club 1/4/1951
30. *ibid.*
31. R Mettler (Baruch Hirson): 'It is Time to Awake: A Critique of I B Tabata's "The Awakening of the People", Hoover Inst Microfilm
32. Peter Dreyer: 'The Death Agony of Non-Europeanism', Hoover Inst Microfilm
33. Gamiet, *op. cit.*
34. The Citizen 14/5/56
35. Dreyer *op. cit.*
36. E Hassim, Anti-CAD Conference 1954, Hoover Inst Microfilm
37. Mettler *op. cit.*
38. The Citizen 16/12/56
39. Torch 18/3/58
40. This account is derived from a combination of sources to be found in Voice, Torch, New Age, Analysis and Citizen
41. Mandela 'Our struggle Needs Many Tactics', in Mandela (1978) pp.67-71
42. See Alexander (1987) pp. 18ff
43. Soyan Feb 1959
44. See Jordaan for a fine critique of both parties

45. Bundy (1987)
46. Peter Dreyer, op.cit.
47. Alexander op.cit.
48. 'Towards a Modern South African Patriotism', n.d. Hoover Inst Microfilm
49. Kenneth Hendrickse: 'The Essence of Multi-Racialism', Hoover Inst. Microfilm
50. Counter-Attack, May 1959
51. COD Speakers Notes, Hoover Inst Microfilm
52. 'Fusing the Congresses?', Liberation 37, July 1959
53. Vic Goldberg: 'One Congress' 1959 , Hoover Inst Microfilm
54. ibid.
55. Counter-Attack May 1959
56. ibid.
57. The document is in Hoover Inst Microfilm
58. George Sacks, 'Communism For South Africa' , Hoover Inst Microfilm
59. Anon. , Hoover Inst Microfilm
60. Joe Nkatlo , Hoover Inst Microfilm
61. 'The New Africa - Capitalist or Socialist?', editorial in The African Communist, 1, Oct 1959 in SACP (1981) pp. 248-254
62. Toussaint, 'How Foreign is Communism?', Africa Communist, 2, April 1960 and 'New Problems of a Continent in Revolution', African Communist, 3, Sept 1960 and in SACP (1981), pp. 254-267
63. SACP (1981), pp. 284-320

Ch. 11 The mass strike: footnotes

1. Luckhardt and Wall (1980), p. 356
2. *ibid.* p. 163
3. A copy is in the Hoover Institute Microfilm
4. Lambert (1979), p. 23
5. Luckhardt and Wall (1980) p. 120
6. Feit (1975) p. 120
7. Minutes of the 1959 SACTU Annual Conference, Hoover Inst Microfilm
8. Minutes of the 1960 SACTU Annual Conference, Hoover Inst Microfilm
9. *ibid.*
10. Minutes of the 1962 SACTU Annual Conference, Hoover Inst Microfilm
11. Luckhardt and Wall (1980) p. 166
12. Hoover Institute Microfilm
13. Citizen 17/6/57
14. Cited in De Clercq (1979a) p. 90
15. For an alternative discussion of the term 'political unionism' see Lambert (1984)
16. Blumberg (1959) p. 12
17. Drum, March 1961
18. *ibid.*
19. Blumberg (1959), p. 18
20. *ibid.*, p. 16
21. Drum, Oct 1959 and see Yawitch (1977)
22. Kuper (1960), p. 26
23. Luckhardt and Wall (1980) pp. 305-6

24. Kiley (1960)
25. Liberation, Feb 1956 and see Bundy (1987)
26. Kotane, 'The Way Forward', 1954
27. Mbeki (1964) pp. 130-131
28. Lodge (1983) p. 283
29. The Spark, Dec 1960/30. The Star 28/3/60
31. *ibid.*
32. See Horrell (1960) and Anonymous Correspondent 'The Nineteen Days', Africa South, 1960
33. Discussion with Baruch Hirson
34. Lambert (1979) p. 33
35. Hirson (1961), p. 12
36. *ibid.*
37. Financial Mail 25/6/75 and Statistical year Book (1966) pp. 31-33
38. Star 15/5/60
39. Star 31/3/60
40. Albertyn (1984) p. 34
41. Trapido (1968) p. 110
42. Frankel (1984) pp. 31 and 72
43. Johnstone (1977)
44. Bunting (1961) pp. 56-66
45. *ibid.*
46. Mandela, 'The Struggle for a National Convention', March 1961 in Mandela (1978) p. 97
47. Webster (1981), p. 10
48. New Age, 1/6/61 and 8/6/61
49. Mandela, 'Out of the Strike', Africa South, Oct-Dec 1961, pp. 16-23

50. Karis and Carter 3 p.364

51. A Special Correspondent, 'Techniques of Revolt', Africa South, 6, 1,
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52. *ibid.*

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1. Leo Kuper (1960) p.20
2. ANC (1982), p.65
3. Slovo (1973), p. 339
4. Tilton (1987) p.27
5. Fighting Talk Nov 1961
6. Karis and Carter 3 p.716
7. Tilton (1987), p.29
8. Karis and Carter 3 p.778
9. Mandela (1978) pp116-124
10. ANC NEC Statement 'The People Accept the Challenge of the Nationalists', April 6 1963, in Karis and Carter 3 pp.746-753
11. *ibid.*
12. African Communist, 2,3, April-June 1963 'The Revolutionary Way Out'
13. *ibid.*
14. Karis and Carter 3 p.776
15. *ibid.*
16. *ibid.* p.772
17. *ibid.*
18. *ibid.*
19. 'The ANC Spearheads the Revolution', *ibid.* pp 754-8
20. African Communist, 2,3, April-June 1963
21. *ibid.*
22. Star, 21/4/64
23. African Communist 11,2 Jan-March 1963
24. Karis and Carter 3 pp.760-67

25. *ibid.*, pp. 676-7
26. African Communist, 1968
27. Karis and Carter 3 p. 780
28. African Communist, 2, 1, Oct-Dec 1962
29. To be found in the Hoover Inst Microfilm
30. *ibid.*
31. Feit (1975)
32. Luckhardt and Wall (1980) p. 421
33. To be found in the Hoover Inst Microfilm
34. Luckhardt and Wall (1980) p. 436
35. ANC (1969)
36. Sechaba, 5, 12, Dec 1971
37. ANC (1969)
38. *ibid.*
39. Sechaba op. cit.
40. Slovo (1977)
41. Turok (1973)
42. *ibid.*, p. 360
43. *ibid.*,
44. Inqaba 13 March-May 1984, p. 42
45. *ibid.*
46. *ibid.*
47. *ibid.*
48. New Age, 20/7/61
49. Bundy (1987) pp. 277-8
50. Copelyn (1977)
51. Arenstein went on to become a sympathiser of Chief Gatsha Butelezi's

zulu-nationalist Inkata movement.

52. Lodge (1983) pp. 241-255

53. Lodge (n. d.) p. 107

54. Based on discussions with Baruch Hirson

55. Bulletins of the Workers Democratic League, personal copies

56. Hirson (1989), pp. 21-35

57. *ibid.*

58. Found in the Hoover Inst. Microfilm

Appendix 1: footnotes

1. See Stadler (1983), p. 57
2. Inkululeko, 14 August 1943
3. Stadler (1983), p. 58
4. Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Operation of Bus Services for Non-Europeans on the Witwatersrand, UG 31-44, para.s 245 and 262; cited in Hirson (1986), p. 196
5. Inkululeko, 18 Sept 1943
6. Karis and Carter, 2, pp. 391-396
7. Trek September 1945
8. 'The Alexandra bus boycott', South African Treasurer, 1945, col. 17, p. 39
9. This argument is made more fully in Mbeki (1981)
10. Hirson (1986), pp. 183-195
11. Beinart (1987); Hirson (1986), pp. 233-5
12. Walshe (1970), p. 385; cited in Bundy (1987), p. 276
13. Brooks (1967), p. 53; cited in Bundy (1987), p. 280
14. Tabata: 'The agrarian problem', lecture to SOYA, May 1954; cited in Bundy (1987), p. 267. A brilliant critique of Tabata's position may be found in Kenny Jordaan, 'The land question in South Africa', Points of View, 1,1, 1959
15. Karis and Carter, 2, pp. 355-7
16. See Jordaan (1959)
17. Xuma's Presidential address to the ANC Conference Dec 1941; quoted in Bundy (1987), p. 283
18. Bundy (1987), p. 267

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Abbreviations

CUP= Cambridge University Press
OUP= Oxford University Press.
ICS= Institute of Commonwealth Studies
IDAF= International Defence and Aid Fund
JSAS= Journal of Southern African Studies
ROAPE= Review of African Political Economy.
SAIRR= South African Institute of Race Relations
SALB= South African Labour Bulletin

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