

A JOURNAL OF LIBERAL AND RADICAL OPINION

Vol 13  
No 3

# reality

May 1981

50 cents

S.A.I.R.R.  
REFERENCE



# in this issue . . .

EDITORIALS: 1. Real South Africans . . . . .	2
2. Poles Apart . . . . .	3
CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO WAR by Charles Yeats . . . . .	4
LAWYERS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS by Ernie Wentzel . . . . .	7
REPUBLICAN SONG AND ELECTION by Vortex . . . . .	8
THE NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA . . . . .	9
ORGANISED BLACK POLITICAL RESISTANCE 1912-1950; Part 2: 1930-1950 by Tom Lodge . . . . .	10
TRIBUTE TO E.V. MAHOMED by J. F. Hill . . . . .	13
A FRESH CLEAR VOICE: REVIEW OF SHABIR BANOOBHAI'S ECHOES OF MY OTHER SELF By Colin Gardner . . . . .	14
DURBAN HOUSING IN CRISIS by Crispin Hemson . . . . .	15
REVIEW OF J. M. COETZEE'S WAITING FOR THE BARBARIANS by John Passmore . . . . .	18
RICK TURNER'S CONTINUING CHALLENGE: A REVIEW OF HIS THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE by Colin Gardner . . . . .	20

Articles printed in Reality do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Editorial Board.

## **EDITORIALS**

### **1. REAL SOUTH AFRICANS**

In recent months two people have died whose lives were wonderful examples of what, in our view, a good South African's life should be. They were E.V. Mahomed and Nell Marquard.

Their backgrounds could hardly have been more different. E.V., whose family could not afford to see him through to the end of school, the Stanger bookkeeper who taught himself almost all there was to know about the South African political scene; Nell Marquard, with her roots in the university world, teaching English, married to Leo, one of South Africa's most profound political thinkers, one of the greatest of the Afrikaner dissidents.

Both Nell and E.V. were amongst the first members of the Liberal Party of South Africa. E.V. founded the Party's Stanger branch, was its driving force for many years, became National Treasurer of the Party, and was finally banned, the ban still being in effect when the Government closed the Party down. With Leo, Nell forged a partnership which was an inspiration to Liberals of

all ages and groups for many years, but particularly to young Liberals during the hard and frustrating years from the Nationalist accession to power in 1948 to Leo's death in 1974. And after his death she still kept on fighting for what they had both so firmly believed in.

Each of these two formed a remarkable relationship with one of the leading black political figures of our day. E.V.'s close friendship with Chief Luthuli and his family was something which developed over many years. They were the two outstanding figures in the Stanger community. When the Chief was banned, and E.V. was still free, the Mahomed office and home became Luthuli's channel of communication to the outside world. But in spite of this friendship E.V. never joined the Congress Movement. Its sectional organisation was something he could not accept. It was in the Liberal Party that he found the non-racial political home he wanted.

The story of Nell Maarquard's friendship with Robert Sobukwe is extraordinary. As she wrote in REALITY at

the time of Sobukwe's death, it was a friendship which 'began and grew in letters'. When the notorious 'Sobukwe clause' was added to the General Laws Amendment Act, so that Robert Sobukwe could be kept on Robben Island after completing his sentence, Nell wrote to him, although she did not know him, to ask if he would like her to send him the 'New Yorker' and 'The Listener'. He said that he would, and from there grew the friendship which was to be confirmed and cemented when Robert Sobukwe was finally released from gaol and banned to Kimberley, where Nell Marquard soon went to visit him.

These two, the Stanger bookkeeper and the Stellenbosch lecturer, achieved neither great fame, nor power, nor riches, but something greater than all three.

They showed that the primary constraint which the South African situation places on us all, the racially restrictive conditions into which we are born and in which we grow up, can be overcome - that the best South Africans are those to whom their own and anyone else's race has come to mean nothing. These are the kind of people we need for the future. □

## 2. POLES APART

In March Bishop Desmond Tutu was in the United States, predicting that South Africa would have a black Prime Minister within 10 years.

Meanwhile, back home on the hustings, an election campaign was being fought and the Herstigte Nationalist Party was saying that South Africa would never, ever, have a black Prime Minister, except over its dead body, and the Nationalist Party of Mr. P.W. Botha was saying much the same thing, even if less stridently in some constituencies than others.

That South Africa will have a black Prime Minister one day we have no doubt. The simple arithmetic of the populat-

ion of the country and the African continent decrees that. It is how that day arrives that matters.

When no Herstigte, and not many Nationalists, would dream of even saying a polite word to Bishop Tutu, whose conditions for peaceful change are perfectly reasonable, and a growing number of black people won't talk to any white person, Herstigte, Nationalist or anything else, what hope is there of avoiding the ghastly conflict even Mr. B.J. Vorster could see might come?

Not much, judging by the tone of the election campaign mounted by the various brands of Afrikaner Nationalism. □



# CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO WAR

by Charles Yeats.

Extracts from an article "A Christian Response to Military Call-up" in Diakonia

## A CHRISTIAN VOCATION:

The word "pacifist" derives from pax and facere and therefore means "peacemaker". Christians are all given this vocation in its wider sense following Christ's blessing of the peacemakers in the Beatitudes.

Christian peacemakers however differ in their approaches to peacemaking. Some will wage war in order to restore peace while others, for the same motive, will seek to avoid a direct involvement in war.

## LEVELS OF REFUSAL:

It is no longer possible to refuse all participation in war for the reason that governments employ a "total strategy" in modern warfare. This strategy attempts to harness all the resources of the economy for the war effort. Citizens therefore cannot avoid some degree of complicity in war, even if this amounts only to their paying taxes which contribute to the efficiency of their country's defence force.

The factor of complicity complicates a definition of conscientious objection. It may even make a logical defence of conscientious objection, based on graded levels of refusal, impossible. Nevertheless the consensus is that conscientious objection involves at the very least a refusal to serve as a combatant in war.

## HOW DOES THE CHRISTIAN SUPPORT HIS 'NO' TO WAR:

In areas where the Gospels appear to be silent Christians frequently rely on inferences drawn from Jesus' example to guide their decisions. The approach is consistent with the command, often repeated in the New Testament, that the disciples ought to model themselves on their Master. With this in mind, James Moulder's demonstration that Christ's example supports a refusal to submit to combat training is helpful.

He advances a positive and negative thesis in support of this claim.

### a) A Positive Thesis:

The positive thesis is that the 'New Testament contains narratives about Christ which suggest that, if He had been conscripted, He would have refused to submit to combat training'.

Christ's example at His arrest in Gethsemane is cited: After one of those who were with Him and had struck off the ear of the high priest's slave, Christ commanded him to sheath his sword with the admonition 'All who take the sword will perish by the sword'.

The difficulty in relying on Biblical interpretation is illustrated by two commentaries on this scripture. S.G.F. Brandon claims that 'the saying cannot be regarded as a proverbial condemnation of the profession of arms, since it is manifestly untrue that all soldiers die in armed combat'. This is thought to be too literal an interpretation, and T.H. Robinson's commentary has received wider support, 'a kingdom founded on force is always liable to be overthrown by superior force'.

### b) A Negative Thesis:

The negative thesis 'is that the New Testament does not record any incident which suggests that, if He had been conscripted, Christ would have been prepared to submit to training.'

The closest one comes to an example is in the incident of Christ cleansing the temple. The righteous anger of Jesus, resulting in physical violence, however falls short of the violence inflicted by a combatant in war. Instead, this passage establishes that Christ is not a pacifist who renounces every kind of coercive behaviour.

## THE HEALING MINISTRY:

A criticism noted by James Moulder is that the Gospel passages quoted above have no relevance to war. In the first the occasion amounts to a police arrest, and the second to an individual act of coercion.

The counter relies on Christ's healing ministry. The incompatibility of the activities of healing and waging war avoids the irrelevancy argument, even if it has validity, for Christ would not have spent so much of His time healing people were he not also to reject the role of the combatant inflicting suffering in war.

## HOW DOES THE CHRISTIAN SUPPORT HIS 'YES' TO PEACE IN SOUTH AFRICA?

The Christian peacemaker cannot be content with saying 'no' to war, he needs also to say 'yes' to peace and work to that end.

The conscript in South Africa is constrained in his peacemaking by the Defence Act. The Act makes a limited concession to conscientious objection by permitting a form of non-combatant service. There is no provision made for objectors who refuse to serve and who request a non-military form of national service. These objectors are served with recurring sentences in detention barracks for their disobedience.

The choice facing conscientious objectors is consequently one of serving as a non-combatant or refusing to serve and being sentenced with recurring periods of detention. It is helpful to view this choice in the light of the Incarnation, as it is Christ's example which is used to support a refusal to submit to combat training.

#### THE NON-COMBATANT OPTION:

The conscript who elects to serve as a non-combatant identifies with the suffering, anguish and ambiguity of his fellow conscripts and their families. Service in the Medical Corps provides the opportunity to share in Christ's healing ministry, while service in other non-combatant units may provide opportunities for pastoring fellow conscripts.

The non-combatant may further support his decision to accept a peacemaking role in the military by the belief that it is alongside his fellow conscripts that the pacific witness is best made. For this reason the non-combatant will not refuse conscript for by so doing he might risk alienating himself from his fellows.

The argument may be further developed to take account of a racially segregated society. Here witness is argued to be best directed at one's own racial group, providing further reason for avoiding action which may lead to a distancing of oneself from contemporaries.

#### THE NON-MILITARIST POSITION:

The non-militarist believes that Jesus' example leads him to identify with a wider community than that of white conscripts and their families. He believes himself called to a particular ministry of reconciliation.

This ministry calls for the rejection of any role in the military and a request for alternative national service as a witness to the avoidability of civil war in South Africa.

The contribution of the non-militarist to peace has to be seen in the light of the reasonableness of the Cross. For the secular man, Christ's death must represent an absurdity. As St. Paul describes it, 'the message of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are saved it is the power of God'.

Through Christ's sacrifice a power was unleashed on earth which overcame the separation of mankind and destroyed the power of Satan. This mystery Christians believe.

Christians in themselves cannot repeat the act of redemption but they are called to share in distributing redemptive power. Michael Ramsay captures the meaning behind the creative use of suffering when he writes, 'for Christians to suffer is not defeat or tragedy ....., is not a cult of martyrdom or a kind of masochism or a laudation of suffering in itself. It goes with the belief in the divine use of suffering ....., creative in its impact.'

For this reason the non-militarist does not invite suffering but, if called to suffer, believes that God will use him for a redeeming work. He is therefore prepared to accept the consequences of conscientious objection if the State will not provide non-military national service.

#### NON-MILITARY NATIONAL SERVICE:

Most conscientious objectors would be willing to serve a non-military form of national service rather than languish idly in detention barracks. Their willingness is based on the premise that the only lasting security possible for society is the development of a caring community. Further they accept that in order to compensate for the hardships of

military life their service ought to be for a longer period.

The concept of a non-military alternative enjoys widespread support. Francis Wilson, for instance, has argued for a more positive and comprehensive form of national service in South Africa. Similarly, W.V. Raw, debating the Defence Further Amendment Bill of 1972, argued that it would be more "Humane and more just" not to imprison a conscientious objector. His proposal was that the objector should be allotted to a 'fire station or a hospital or similar service for a period of two years in lieu of military service'.

Most Western countries now provide alternatives outside the military framework. These include the United States, Canada, Australia, Sweden, Norway, Belgium, Italy, Holland, France and West Germany. This provision is consistent with a growing awareness that conscientious objection to war is a human right.

#### THE KILLING SPIRIT:

Augustine presented a novel justification for Christian participation in armed conflict. His claim is that killing does not necessarily clash with loving the enemy. What is important is the spirit in which the killing is done.

On this foundation and from the principles of natural law he developed a set of criteria by which the permissibility of war can be weighed.

#### JUST WAR CRITERIA:

Some of these criteria have to do with the origins of war: Is there a just cause? Has every reasonable attempt been made to get redress without bloodshed? Will war be declared by a legitimate authority?

Other criteria concern the way in which the war is fought: Is it to be waged solely by legitimate and moral means? Is the damage which is likely to be incurred by the war less grievous than the prior injury? Is success likely?

These are taxing questions. Certainly one of the criticisms of the theory is the difficulty of applying its precisions to the complexity of war.

#### THEOLOGY:

The shortcomings of the theology supporting this doctrine are dealt with exhaustively in 'The Just War in Aquinas and Grotius' by Joan Tooke. Her conclusion is that there exists an imperfect harmony between the principles of Natural Law and Christianity: The Natural Law dictate of acting in accordance with reason, which provides a legitimation for a resort to force in self defence, is opposed to some essential aspects of Jesus' teaching. The disharmony is nowhere greater than in the reasonableness of the Cross; Christ in refusing to call on the twelve legions of angels at his arrest sets a higher vocation for Christians than self-preservation.

#### CONFLICTING VERSIONS:

A further difficulty with the theory is that successive contributors have now produced a number of conflicting versions. Two examples from James Moulder's paper on 'Conscientious Objection in South Africa' make the point:

- a) John Rawls insists that a war is just only if it is being waged in self defence and only if the nation concerned has just institutions which it wants to preserve. John Calvin, however, argues that nations may wage a just war not only 'to preserve the tranquillity of their dominion' but also to 'help those forcibly oppressed.'

- b) Thomas Aquinas requires a war to be waged by a legitimating authority before it can count as a just war. But Jacques Ellul does not insist on this test. And so he allows for the possibility that a civil war may be just.

The conflicting versions must generate confusion in the mind of a believer sincerely searching for consistency in the theological tradition of his church. But perhaps of greater consequence is that the conflicting versions allow for the development of a theology of the just revolution.

#### THE 'JUST WAR' BECOMES THE 'JUST REVOLUTION'

In Liberation theology, the just war becomes the just revolution. Davis writes, "If Christians, who accept the possibility that some wars may be just, are to be consistent, they must also admit that the use of force, including killing, may be right in relation to revolution." This is surely valid; if it is right to resist a foreign invader, then it is equally right to resist by force one's own government if it is intent on oppressing the people.

God certainly has taken an option on the oppressed but to believe that this legitimises violent revolution is perhaps to overlook the dialectical character of God, who is both Love and Justice. It is doubtful whether the Just War and just revolution adequately stand the scrutiny of this dialectical tension.

#### A DENIAL OF LOVE:

Augustine justified killing in a 'just war' because he could kill while still loving the enemy. At least Davis does not make the same claim for Liberation theology. He recognises that when his revolutionary requites the oppressor, there is a denial of love. Instead, Davis' thesis is that in a revolutionary situation there is no response whereby the Christian can be justified.

He illustrates this point using a three-fold reference of love in a revolutionary situation. "There is, first, love to the oppressed which may lead us to defend them by force. There is, second, love for the oppressor which may lead us to remove him from power as a step towards his own liberation and greater humanization. There is, third, a denial of love if I have to kill an oppressor".

Davis claims that there is no way out of this dilemma whereby a Christian can be justified; every response entails a partial denial of love and there is no "cheap grace".

#### THE WAY OF CHRIST:

Davis' thesis presents a challenge to Christians who believe that Christ never intended them to practise a denial of love. The challenge is to follow the example of Jesus.

Patterning oneself on the life of Jesus has always provided justification for Christian action. For instance, St. Paul urges Christians to "walk in the same way as He (Jesus) walked".

In conflict Christ's walk was to lead him to the cross. He lived in a political environment every bit as revolutionary as is found today. Palestine of the first century was an occupied country, restively submitting to a none-too-benevolent Roman rule. In his ministry he was continually challenged with the Zealot alternative which was to liberate Israel by military force.

This alternative Jesus rejected for the way of the cross; he did not come to be a military messiah but the suffering servant. In this he was obedient to a higher calling, witnessing to the truth that before the oppressor and oppressed could

be liberated from each other, they needed to be liberated from themselves.

Jesus in taking the way of the cross, rather than adopting the methods of revolutionary violence to free the oppressed, practised no denial of love. Instead his sacrifice is the perfection of love. And this is the escape provided the disciple. By opposing violence with non-violence while working for peace the Christian fulfills his calling.

Christ himself commanded this response, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me".

#### NON-VIOLENT ACTION:

The way of non-violence is conceivably the only response consistent with Jesus' commands to love one's enemies and to take up the cross in a situation of violence. Yet non-violence is criticized for its passivity. This need not be true when the principles of non-violent action are followed.

Non-violent action makes an assumption regarding the source of power on which is built a challenging new theory of man's potential to resist injustice. The assumption made is that power is given to the rulers and can therefore be withheld. This is not a new insight but what is new are the methods by which ordinary people can withhold that power. Some of these have been successfully tested by movements instructed by Gandhi and Martin Luther King and in situations in Nazi occupied Europe. But the methods of non-violent action are largely untried because of the high cost of commitment; instead of a remote high command sending out some less remote troops to resist a would-be-oppressor, non-violent action requires the involvement of individuals, all laying themselves on the line. This is difficult, and yet for Christians disillusioned with the ambivalence of the Just War, non-violent action promises a new beginning.

#### STATEMENT

##### 1. CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO WAR:

- 1.1 As a confirmed member of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (Anglican), I am obliged to translate its teaching to my life.
- 1.2 The 1978 Lambeth Conference resolution on war and violence urges all Christians to re-examine as a matter of urgency their own attitude towards, and their complicity with, violence in its many forms.
- 1.3 Article thirty-seven (37) of the Anglican Church allows Christians to participate in a "Just War". While Protestants have on the whole abandoned the precisions of the Just War Doctrine, the article remains the subject of controversy in the Anglican Communion.
- 1.4 The example of Jesus in His healing ministry, the way of the Cross as Jesus' response to conflict and my reservations about Just War theory convict me not to serve as a combatant in any war.
- 1.5 I do therefore subscribe to the charter of the international Anglican Pacifist Fellowship. The pledge of the fellowship is to 'renounce war and all preparation to wage war, and to work for the construction of Christian peace in the world'.

##### 2. NON-COMBATANT SERVICE:

- 2.1 I nevertheless think it helpful to make a rough distinction between wars which appear to be avoid-



able by means of a negotiated settlement, and those which do not. In wars where a negotiated settlement is clearly not possible, I would be prepared to serve as a non-combatant in the medical corps. In this capacity and in such a war it would be possible to identify with Christ's healing ministry without fear that one was directly contributing to the suffering of war.

- 2.2 In South Africa it appears possible to avert war by involving representative Black leaders in a political settlement. My pledge to renounce all preparation

to wage war must in this instance cause me to refuse a non-combatant posting in the Defence Force. This refusal is in my view consistent with working towards the construction of Christian peace in South Africa.

### 3. NON-MILITARY NATIONAL SERVICE:

- 3.1 Rather than languish idly in detention barracks, which is the penalty for refusal, conscientious objectors should be employed in alternative service. I therefore request a non-military national service. □

# LAWYERS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

BY E.M. Wentzel (a member of the Public Relations Committee of Lawyers for Human Rights)

Only in a very strange society could a lawyers' organisation have such a title. Can there be lawyers who, publicly at any rate, would declare themselves against?

Law and the concept of rights are really tweedledum and tweedledee. The object of law is to define and protect rights: those of the individual against the state (and vice versa), and individual against individual. 'Against' is deliberately chosen; our whole system is adversary and the law is an essential aspect of it, a mechanism to enforce and secure these rights.

'Human Rights' has, however, a particular emphasis. These are those individual rights which assure a man of his dignity and esteem within society. Apartheid makes these an especial concern in South Africa for those who seek life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Of course, lawyers had been concerned with human rights before this new society was launched. South African lawyers have a deservedly good reputation in this field. The credit however for the idea of a society of lawyers to act specifically in this field is firstly due to Professor John Dugard. His work 'Human Rights and the South African

Legal Order' (1978) was provocative and a sign leading us away from complacency to self-criticism.

Then the 1979 conference at the University of Cape Town and the excellent publication with which the University followed it, stimulated action. An association of those with similar concerns was an obvious path; but it took particularly Professor van der Vyfer (formerly of Potchefstroom and now at Wits) to put it together into an organised society.

The first chairman is Advocate Johan Kriegler, at one time chairman of the Johannesburg Bar. A constitution has been adopted and membership is growing. A newsletter is being published. Gradually the new Society is taking shape.

These are early days; the scope for activity seems unlimited. No doubt the society will shape itself to the particular needs its personalities and resources determine.

Meanwhile those interested should write to :- Lawyers for Human Rights, Centre for Applied Legal Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, 1, Jan Smuts Avenue, Johannesburg 2001. □

## REPUBLICAN SONG

(dedicated to the Pietermaritzburg City Council)

Let's celebrate, let's celebrate  
the grand Republic fest:  
we've shown the whole world that we're great,  
that our guns are among the best.

There's a great deal to be glad about,  
let's dance and sing in the street:  
the rich are rich and the poor are poor  
and never the twain shall meet.

We want the blacks to join the fest  
and feel they're one with us  
(we're taking away their citizenship,  
but they won't dare make a fuss.)

The boys are on the border now,  
"vasbyt" and "shoot the dogs":  
in the large wheels of apartheid  
they are humble, mindless cogs.

Let's celebrate especially  
the power of the old N.P.:  
squabble and jostle and lie to the press  
to proclaim its unity.

The N.P. faces the future with pride  
and the reason for this we know:  
it's going to transform society  
into the status quo.

We're enjoying an economic boom,  
the sound hums in our ears:  
if I can buy a Mercedes  
why should I have any fears?

Why should I worry about the poor  
whom I read of in the press?

What has it got to do with me  
if their lives are in a mess?

Come beat the drum, come beat the drum,  
and don't be shy or weak:  
we've shown the whole world once and for all  
that our way-of-life is unique.

Vortex

## ELECTION

The whites are holding an election.

As a black man I look on.

The whites get very excited at their elections.

What is the cause of thier excitement?

Me.

They argue endlessly about what I think,  
and what I want to do.

Why don't they ask me what I think?

O no, no, no. That wouldn't be playing the game;  
that would be going beyond all civilized electoral procedures.

But why don't they talk to me —

just once, very quickly?

O no: it can't be done.

It is unpatriotic for a white man to ask a black man a question,  
unless the white man is sure of the answer,

and insists that the black man repeat it after him,  
several times,

to the tune of Die Stem.

So the whites who run the elections aren't interested in my  
views and yet somehow they keep worrying about them.

Why is this?

It is because they know what I really think,

but won't and can't admit it,

and so carry on asking themselves the question,

again and again,

hoping that eventually the problem will evaporate.

One day I'm going to creep up behind the white rulers,  
quite quietly, quite gently,

and say:

BANG!

POW!

They'll all get such a fright that

they'll hold another election.

Vortex



# THE NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

## EXTRACTS FROM THE UNIONS FIRST INFORMATION SHEET

In May of last year a group of teachers and academics on the Witwatersrand met to discuss the responsibility of educationists in view of the education crisis in the country. An interim committee was formed to involve more teachers and to contact existing teacher organizations. After another meeting, to widen our base and advertise our initiative and after obtaining press and radio coverage, a properly advertised meeting was held in the Selborne Hall in Johannesburg, at which the 600 people present passed the following resolution:—

1. That this meeting elect a council of some forty members to constitute the governing body of a non-racial association of South African educationists.
2. That such a council be empowered to elect its own executive committee to foster the establishment of branches of the association throughout South Africa and to co-opt representatives from these branches.
3. That this council and its executive committee then organize a national convention on education, at which a permanent constitution for such an association will be adopted.
4. That the name of the new association be the National Education Union of South Africa.
5. That the National Union give priority among its aims to the focussing of professional attention on the education crisis in South Africa and that it work for the achievement of a non-racial South African Teachers Council and a single and equal education system in South Africa, providing this does not imply centralized control.
6. That the National Union seek maximum co-operation with all existing teachers' associations.

The meeting was addressed by Mr Fanyana Mazibuko of the Soweto Teachers' Action Committee, the Rev. John Thorne, past president of the S.A. Council of Churches, Mr Ralph Thomas, President of the S.A. Union of Teachers and Professor Phillip Tobias, Dean of the Wits Medical School.

Other prominent community leaders, academics, school principals and clergymen, including Professor R. W. Charlton Deputy Chancellor of Wits University and Bishop Tutu, identified publicly with our move by sitting on the platform. The Council that was then elected (all 60 of those nominated) then held a meeting, at which the present executive was formed, with powers of co-option, to make itself more representative.

### THE STARTING OF BRANCHES:

We hope that recipients of this information sheet will start branches elsewhere with control over their finances and with

intensive membership drives, so that a truly national and professional union can be formed. Existing teacher organizations, into which the profession is fragmented at present, and through which it is co-ordinated with the apartheid system, will continue to have to represent their members' interests, but we feel that we need at least, as well, a single body through which we can represent and take responsibility for the educational needs of the country as a whole. Doctors, lawyers, engineers etc. all have bodies which transcend apartheid, as these professions all have Statutory councils from which no member of these professions is excluded. Given the recurrent educational crisis in the country, we feel that we should have a major say in designing a more equitable system than the present one which so many students feel has been imposed on them by insensitive and ill-informed politicians, all of them white. By assuming such responsibility together, we will enhance education as a profession to the benefit of all teachers and all students.

Some 600 children have died violently under the present system as a result of disturbances provoked by its inequalities, when we have a special responsibility for the welfare of such young people. At our proposed National Convention we hope to bring to bear our educational experience to ensure the most profitable redistribution of resources.

### ONE EQUAL EDUCATION SYSTEM:

In this connection our aims are:

1. Equal per capita expenditure on schooling for all children.
2. Equal facilities, buildings, playing fields, libraries, laboratories etc. in open schools.
3. Parity of salaries for teachers with the same qualifications.
4. Equal and open teacher training facilities.
5. Scope for cultural diversity, but within institutions open to all.

We are aware, however, that equality of opportunity can lead to inequalities of the grossest kind and that where class replaces race as a basis for discrimination the profession has a special responsibility. Therefore we are committed to education for equality in the broadest sense instead of a system which promotes privilege. Higher education is a privilege for which community service is due in return.

### THE STRUCTURING, DESIGN AND CONTROL OF EDUCATION:

We recognize the interest of Government, churches, business and the other professions in the structuring and content of education, but insist on a far greater say than at present for

parents and educationists and an appropriate form of consultation with senior students. This should be reflected in the role the profession plays in the design and control of education and in a new realization that teaching depends on the educator as an autonomous, competent and responsible professional, someone whose promotion, for instance, should not depend on his deference to authority and someone whose initiative should not be undermined by bureaucratic directives. Only if this condition is met will there be a real decentralization of control and the desirable degree of variety and experimentation.

#### OUR ATTITUDE TO OTHER TEACHER ORGANIZATIONS:

The ideal would be for them to establish a single professional body, but not in the form of a federation of bodies which would perpetuate the divisions between us and continue to weaken the profession. Could they but decide to they could establish the body we need in a very short time. If some of them decide to we will have a strong professional body and our National Convention on Education that much sooner.□

# ORGANISED BLACK POLITICAL RESISTANCE 1912–1950.

## PART 2 1930 - 1950

from a talk to NUSAS by Tom Lodge

(Part 1, 1912 - 1930, was published in REALITY vol 13 no 2 March 1981)

The 1930s was a decade when both the ANC and the CPSA reached the lowest point in their influence. The Communists, from being the best organised, most militant grouping active amongst black South Africans, were to lose much of their popular following. This was partly a consequence of the systematic policy of harassment pursued by the state, and particularly the Minister of Justice, Oswald Pirow, but the Communist decline was not simply a result of more energetic repression. From 1933, with the ascendancy of Nazism in Germany, Communist parties throughout the world in conformity with the advice of the Communist International formed so-called 'popular front' alliances with reformist anti-fascist groupings. In South Africa, confronted with the attempts by Afrikaner nationalist forces to capture the white Labour Movement, Communists from the mid-thirties concentrated on combating what they perceived to be fascist tendencies amongst white workers. An all-white 'Peoples Front' was established and tacit support offered to the Labour Party. Symptomatic of their approach was a pamphlet addressed to white workers entitled 'Communism and the Native Question'. Part of it read:

'If the Kaffir Boetie jibe doesn't get home, such people will follow up with the shameless assertion that it will end up by all the races getting mixed up and 'How would you like your sister to marry a native?'. This sort of talk shows a great want of confidence in South

African women and is a cheap and unworthy insult to them. It overlooks the fact that neither race **wants** to mix with the other. Where racial intercourse (sic) does take place, it is largely due to the poverty and backwardness of the native women which leaves them without self-respect'<sup>28</sup>

Party newspapers carried less African news, and according to the memories of some of its African members, increasingly they felt that with its strivings for a particular type of respectability it was no longer **their party**<sup>29</sup>. Revival was only to come slowly with the transfer of the party's headquarters to Cape Town in 1937 and its reintegration into the Cape radical tradition which had begun amongst African and coloured workers a decade earlier<sup>30</sup>.

Meanwhile an ever-shrinking Congress floundered its way through the 1930s. Under the leadership of Pixley ka Izaka Seme tensions between different leadership cliques increased and Congress's popular impact dwindled. Seme's approach and the reason for Congress's decline are apparent in this quotation from an article written by him in 1932:

I wish to urge our educated young men and women not to lose contact with your own chiefs. You should make your chiefs and your tribal Councils feel that education is a really good thing. It does not spoil their people nor detribalise them. Most of the miseries which our people suffer in the towns and the country today is

due to this one factor, no confidence between the educated classes and their own uneducated people. The former cannot open any business relations amongst the latter and get good support because to be able to establish a business anywhere you want confidence. The Indian trader succeeds because he makes friends with all classes and ever tries to win their confidence. You should try and do likewise. . . . Congress can make us learn how to produce our own wants as a nation. We can learn to grow cotton and wool and make our own leather boots and blankets in our factories. . . .<sup>31</sup>

As well as reflecting the increasing difficulty the ANC was having in maintaining the allegiance of a chieftaincy ever more dependent for its position on the good will of the authorities the economic message in the speech is also interesting. The general good is identified totally with the fortunes of an aspirant African commercial class. Seme's economic nationalism is also an interesting predecessor to some of the more reactionary themes of Africanism in the 1940s, as well as, more recently, those businessmen who have tried to advance their own fortunes under the catch-all concepts of Black Consciousness. Translated into practical terms, Seme's policies involved the wooing of chiefs and the establishment of African Congress Clubs, which would function as savings organisations with the power to make loans and provide cheap wholesale goods for businessmen. To ensure their smooth operation ex-employees of the Native Affairs Department would handle Congress Club revenues<sup>32</sup>.

Even the eventual passage of the Hertzog legislation in 1936, which removed Africans from the common roll, created for them a new set of segregationist political institutions, including White 'Native Representatives' in Parliament and an elected advisory 'Native Representative Council', as well as entrenching the unequal distribution of land, did not provoke a dramatic response from African politicians. True, after, a conference in Bloemfontein, a new political organisation was established, the All African Convention, with the original purpose of uniting opposition to the legislation, but in the face of reluctance by establishment politicians to boycott the new institutions (a motion which was prompted by left wingers from Cape Town) the AAC and its constituent organisations including Congress settled down into a familiar routine: wordy protests through consultative machinery, delegations, vague calls for African unity, and national days of prayer. The AAC was to be dominated until the war by conservatives: its protestations were to be punctuated by affirmations of loyalty to South Africa and the Crown, and its policy documents, despite some attention to general socio-economic concerns, largely thought out within the premises of Cape Liberalism<sup>33</sup>.

I will now make a small jump to the 1940s, an important transitional period in the history of both nationalist and revolutionary movements in South Africa. All I can do here is to skate over the basic features of an exciting decade, which unlike the one that preceded it has attracted a lot of recent interest from researchers<sup>34</sup>. First of all, let me give you an essential outline of the socio-economic characteristics of the 1940s. The Second World War, through necessarily more complex import substitution as well as the development of production geared to military demands, provided an immense boost to local industrialisation. By 1943 manufacturing had outstripped mining as the largest single contributor to South Africa's gross national product; three years later the industrial and commercial workforce was also beginning to outnumber the mining industry's. This had important implications for the development of

African resistance movements. First of all during the second world war there was a rapid growth in the employment of black semi-skilled workers — who by virtue of their experience and because of the growth in production during the war were in a stronger bargaining position than black workers had ever been before. Secondly, women began to enter the industrial workforce in large numbers — and it is in the early 1940s that there was the first significant attempt to organise women within Congress. Thirdly, there was a large increase in the black urban population — a doubling between 1939 and 1952 — and of this population the migrant component was decreasing — we are talking about families settled permanently in towns. This rise in the rate of urbanisation was the consequence of both the availability of more attractive employment (through the 1940s both mining and agriculture were complaining of labour shortages), as well as the quite desperate conditions that prevailed in the reserves. There is some debate as to whether the sharp wartime decline in reserve production was a structural feature — or more the effect of the terrible series of droughts in the early 1940s that affected especially the Ciskei and the Transkei<sup>35</sup>, but in this context the question is rather academic. What is in no doubt was that in many parts of rural South Africa people were starving and the towns provided the only opportunities for some sort of survival. To swell the flood to the cities were people evicted from white-owned land where previously they had existed as squatters or labour tenants: a boom in wartime food prices increased the impetus towards rural proletarianisation in white agriculture. Within urban centres conditions were also harsh. The war and the years following it witnessed sharp inflation (the cost of staple foods went up by 91 per cent in the years 1940 — 44) outstripping concurrent wage rises in the industrial sector. The chaos in world markets just after the war, as well as local natural disasters, created acute food shortages in the mid 1940s. In East London in 1946 6 out of every 10 children born were to die in their first year, usually from diseases which had their origin in malnutrition<sup>36</sup>. Symptomatic of rural distress (exacerbated by arbitrarily implemented 'betterment schemes' as well as population increases from evictions in 'white' areas) was a tide of fairly violent protest or confrontation with the authorities — this was especially marked in the Northern Transvaal (Vendaland) as well as round Witzieshoek.

The overall political context of this period is also important for any understanding of its importance as a turning point in black political perceptions. The wartime period, especially during the first three years of the War when the position of the Allies remained fairly critical, witnessed a variety of attempts to avoid confrontation and maintain African political quiescence. For example, influx control was briefly suspended (from March 1942 to April 1943) before being reimposed with considerable ferocity: 11 000 were arrested in 13 days of pass raids in Johannesburg in mid 1943. A few social welfare reforms were implemented: free school meals for African schoolchildren, pensions for certain categories of black employees, increased expenditure on education, and so forth. All these measures should be seen in the context of a government increasingly influenced by the requirements of secondary industry for a permanent urbanised and stable workforce. These, as well as Smuts's declaration in 1942 that 'Segregation had fallen on evil days' naturally aroused expectations as well as orienting African politicians away from the theme of economic self help which had been fashionable in the 1930s: welfare state thinking became increasingly evident



in African nationalist ideology. Expectations and political excitement were also stimulated by the international environment: the war itself, declarations endorsing any peoples right to self-determination by Allied Leaders (here I am thinking particularly of the 1943 Atlantic Charter), the United Nations, the proliferation of anti-colonial movements, the independence of India and so on. Any hope or expectations these things provoked were doomed to rapid disappointment: African strikes were banned from late 1942 (though they continued), influx control was extended to many towns in the Cape Province, the Natives Representative Council, established in 1936, was ten years later demonstrably ineffective in influencing Government policy — a 'toy telephone' as one of its members put it, Indian trading and land tenure rights were savagely curtailed in the 1946 Asiatic Land Tenure Act, and finally, in 1948, those politicians who advocated a hesitant programme of reforms based on the needs of advanced industry were swept out of power by a Nationalist Party reflecting the joint concerns of labour starved farmers, white workers confronted with competition with black skills, and smaller and weaker businesses and manufacturers more inclined to coercion rather than co-option.

Before turning to organised political reactions to these conditions let us first very briefly mention some of the more popular responses. The desperate conditions in the towns where municipal authorities were reluctant to provide anything approaching adequate housing or services for the expanding black population together with inflation combined to bring subsistence issues into the forefront of popular consciousness. Especially in Johannesburg (where wages were lower than almost every other major urban centre in the Union) the 1940s were years of effective and popular protest concerning bus fares, the lack of housing, rents and the cost of food. These were manifested in rent strikes, bus boycotts, squatters movements and food riots — as well as the more complex incidents of urban unrest that had as their general background the knife-edge quality of social insecurity in which people lived out their lives: bloody riots in Randfontein, Newlands, Krugersdorp, Sophiatown, Newclare, Pretoria and Durban. In all these events political organisations played at best a peripheral role — stepping in to take part in negotiations, submitting evidence to Commissions — and so forth. Socialist groupings, not altogether surprisingly, were rather more adept at attempting to consolidate some of the emotion and energy unleashed on these occasions, than African nationalists, who still tended to hold themselves aloof from many of the preoccupations of the urban poor — or at best play a defusing role. But even so, their contribution was relatively unimportant in the genesis and course of these outbursts, and tended to be limited to the work of a few isolated and enterprising individuals: Guar Radebe, Josiah Madzunya, Vincent Swart, Baruch Hirson, H.M. Basner — to mention a few.

A more significant role was played by political organisations, especially the Communists and Trotskyites in the formation of trade unions. As we have seen this was a time when black labour had considerable bargaining power and the decade was marked by extensive unionisation, and, despite Government prohibition after 1942 (and Communist hostility to strike action after the entry of Russia into the war), industrial action. Trotskyites, and in particular Max Gordon had stepped into the void left by Communists pursuing their popular front policy in the late thirties, and began organising black unions from 1935 onwards. They were joined by Communists from

1941. By 1945 the Council for Non European Trade Unions had 119 affiliates representing a membership of over 100 000 workers. A mark of their relative success was that during the forties black workers' wages rose at a faster rate than whites'. Most important of all in the context of labour organisations was the unionisation of Mineworkers from 1941 as the result of initiatives taken by ANC and CP members. Mineworkers were particularly exposed to economic hardship: unlike industrial workers, despite inflation their wages remained static and they received no cost of living allowance. In addition their families were affected by the severe contractions in reserve production that occurred in the wartime period. After a series of essentially moderate demands had been rebuffed mineworkers came out on strike in 1946. The strike was savagely put down at a cost of at least twelve dead and 1 000 wounded. The miners had to wait until 1949 for their wage increase, but the government's response and in particular its insensitive handling of the consultative machinery it had established, contributed to a reorientation in the political attitude of middle class African political leaders.

Having sketched out this backdrop we can now discuss briefly the developments within and between the African National Congress and the Communist Party of South Africa. In each case I will look first at ideology before considering the strategic and organisational implications.

The two most important developments at the ideological level as far as the ANC was concerned were, first, the rise of the African National Congress Youth League and the accompanying influence of a new assertive philosophy of 'Africanism', and secondly, the effects of the influence of African Communists within Congress leadership. The origins of the Youth League lay with a small number of young men centred in the Johannesburg townships. Their own imagination was inspired by a variety of currents around them: the consolidation of a powerful nationalist movement amongst Afrikaners around populist concerns; the racial romanticism of Hitler's fascism; the spontaneous popular protests and mass movements of the war years; the increasing awareness of the potential power of the black working class. Also important in influencing their outlook was that, unlike the earlier generation of African political leaders, these were men who had never been educated outside South Africa. In addition to this it has been suggested that their rural upbringing and background may have influenced them to perceive the world in terms of a racial dichotomy uncomplicated by the softening influences of inter-racial contact in liberal institutions<sup>3 7</sup>. The Youth Leaguers, of whom this group formed the original nucleus in 1944, were very critical of the African political establishment. As they put it in their manifesto it could be said with some justification that:

'Congress was forced to play the dual role of being an unconscious police to check the assertion of the popular will on the one hand, and on the other, of constantly warning the authorities that further curtailment of the privileges of the few would compel them, the privileged few, to yield to the pressure for the avalanche of popular opinion which was tired of appeasing the authorities . . .<sup>3 8</sup>

In place of appeasement, of gradualism, of pleas for the integration of the deserving into white society, Congress should substitute, the Youth Leaguers, said, a policy of confrontation and principled non-participation in degrading segregationist institutions. Congress should articulate a clear unequivocal message of nationalism, of cultural pride, of racial assertiveness. Only such a message would have the

psychological force to break through the internalised habits of inferiority and subservience — the pathological condition that Africanists contended was the first barrier to any effective liberation. Already in spontaneous demonstrations the masses were showing their potential power and receptivity to leadership: the most important pre-condition for the rise of a powerful popular political movement was a militant ideology which reflected the natural nationalism of an oppressed race. The implications of this were clear: Congressites should refrain from collaborating with apparently sympathetic whites, be very careful about any association with Communists (Africans were oppressed as a race not as a class — Marxist analysis merely confused the issue), and embrace a Programme of Action based on confrontationist tactics: strikes, civil disobedience and boycotts. Organisation could come later — too often lack of effective organisation had served as an excuse for compromises by Congress in the past. Africanists, with their belief in spontaneity, in the force of the general will, were in any case contemptuous of organisation. This was in part a function of their class background: these men were intellectuals: students, teachers, doctors, lawyers. They were not themselves active in any of the popular struggles of the 1940s. Their self appointed role was that of interpreters of the popular will. Their relative degree of isolation from working class experience inevitably led them to romanticise it.

Nevertheless, whatever the limitations of their world view, their rise in the ranks of Congress, itself having been restructured and given some organisational rigour by its autocratic and brilliant President, A.B. Xuma, was rapid. Internal reforms apart, Congress was reactivated in the 1940s, its still highly conservative leadership being edged into embracing more militant tactics as the result of the evident failure of persuasion and conciliation — as well as threats to its own class position after the accession to power of another strain of petty-bourgeois nationalism in 1948. By 1943, Congress was claiming in a document inspired by the Atlantic Charter, the right of all Africans to the vote, by 1944, prompted by the reimposition of urban influx control, Congress leaders were laying the basis for

future collaboration. Indians were at that point engaged in a civil disobedience campaign against the Indian Land Tenure Bill. The campaign did not succeed in repealing the bill but it did demonstrate the efficacy of Gandhist tactics in arousing mass political participation — by 1947 the Natal Indian Congress had swelled from a small organisation of a few hundred to a membership of 35 000. Finally, in 1949, the ANC adopted as its own a watered-down version of the Youth League's Programme of Action. Though riven by ideological and personal clashes, though still organisationally very weak, Congress had been resurrected.

The Communist Party had also been through a similar phase of reorientation. Increasingly it paid less attention to issues involving white labour (though it was until 1945 to toy with the idea of an alliance with the Labour Party) and to focus its attention on the organisation of black industrial unions.

A rise in black membership and increasing party involvement in communal as well as industrial activity (Communists were peripherally involved in one or two of the squatters movements and there was even an all-peasant party branch in Zoutpansberg) encouraged the party to participate in and sometimes instigate campaigns which had more general appeal than those concerned purely with the situation of industrial workers: passes, free speech, universal suffrage. Cooperation with reformist organisations became more possible — though the relationship between the ANC and the CPSA was never any easy one<sup>39</sup>.

Some of the older African Communists were now members of the ANC establishment: with their predilection for organisation as an essential precondition to any activity, with their mistrust of spontaneity, they could find common ground with the established old guard ANC leaders under attack from the Africanist young men. By 1949, the influence of romantic nationalists on the ANC's NEC was fairly evenly balanced by that of social revolutionaries. The seeds for the conflicts and achievements of the next decade were beginning to germinate. □

See Footnotes on page 17.

## E. V. MAHOMED

A Tribute by Mrs. J.F. Hill.

Chief Albert Luthuli was a great man, and the world acknowledged his greatness and honoured him with the Nobel Peace Prize. Mr. E.V. Mahomed who died in his home at Stanger on March 3rd 1981, was less well known; but all who loved and honoured Chief Luthuli owe a debt of gratitude to one of the best friends any man ever had.

When Chief Luthuli was banned and restricted in his movements, the one town he was free to visit was Stanger, and one home where he was always a welcome and honoured guest was E.V. Mahomed's. In fact, E.V. became Chief Luthuli's main link with the outside world, arranging interviews for individuals who wished to meet this great African leader. When news of the Nobel Prize award broke, journalists from all over the world clamoured to meet or speak with the prize-winner. Arrangements of various kinds had to be made in preparation for the journey

overseas to receive the prize. And in his joy at the honour accorded to his friend, E.V. set aside his own book-keeping business, and turned his office over to Chief Luthuli's business, with himself as unpaid private secretary, coping at his own expense with all the phone calls and telegrams that came pouring in. I was roped in during the last hectic week, to help answer the hundreds of letters; so I saw for myself something of the unstinting way in which E.V. gave himself. This was typical of the man. All his life he gave himself, to his family, his friends, to those in need, and to the cause in which he believed, the cause of justice and freedom, the cause for which Chief Luthuli worked and suffered. I saw something of the warm human relationship between these two men, each of whom had in abundance that quality of ubuntu, of open-hearted warmth, knowing no barriers of language, race or class; that quality which our sad and troubled world so desperately needs. □

# A FRESH CLEAR VOICE

A Review of "Echoes of my other self", by Shabbir Banoobhai. Ravan Press.

by Colin Gardner

This seems to be a pretty good time and place for poetry (South Africa in the 70's and 80's is not asleep, whatever else it may be); and it is a pleasure to salute Shabbir Banoobhai as a most promising and indeed accomplished newcomer to the poetic scene. One had come across a number of his poems in various journals, but they had for some reason not led one to expect anything as quietly powerful and impressive as "Echoes of my other self".

The volume contains pieces on a variety of themes – religious poems, love poems, philosophical poems, poems of social and political concern. Through all of them one senses the poet's personality – sensitive, meditative, scrupulous, passionate, humane. The poems are striking for their simple directness, their imaginative delicacy, their limpid and confident movement.

Readers of Reality (at least in their capacity as readers of this journal) will be concerned especially with the poems dealing with South African society; but it is important to realize that the social poems come from the pen which produced a religious poem like this:

god is ecstatic heart  
and i  
his wild, wild pulse

and a love poem like this:

in each you  
you model before me  
every day  
i see  
beyond the chameleon of your never self  
now green against my growing happiness  
now brown against the dull twig of my sorrow  
the still you  
longing  
to lose yourself  
in my whoever me

Banoobhai's apprehension of society and its pains and injustices is grounded, then, in an impassioned sense of the possibilities of human expansion and human relationships. It bursts out, for example, in the strong but complex poem addressed to Fatima (Fatima Meer, who is banned), the opening stanzas of which are:

they have taken you away  
and left you untouched  
they have locked you up  
and set you free  
they have silenced your voice  
and proclaimed your message

i raked rock with my fingers  
battered my head to bone  
for a long time lay senseless  
heart shocked to stone  
then the words of the Quran  
stirred within me  
i breathed again  
knowing you were safe . . .

One of the most memorable of Banoobhai's poems about society – memorable partly because it is both personal and impersonal, both sensually alert and politically intelligent – is this:

god, please . . .

do not let them turn me into a shop  
to be opened at six in the morning  
and closed at six in the evening  
regulated in the thoughts i may  
and may not display  
advised on who i may  
and may not welcome  
in the sovereign territory of my being

remember that i've tried  
to keep my books of account  
as you've asked me to  
crediting the right  
and criticising the wrong  
diligently, faithfully  
honestly

because i know no other way

call back these self-appointed auditors  
of my soul  
who have declared me insolvent  
and have condemned me  
to a work-house  
where i shall be fed  
impoverished thoughts  
for the best years of my life

god, please . . .

These lines crystallize with a lovely religious clarity the blasphemy involved in the attempt by any human agency to regulate the real workings of a person's intimate existence. The utterance is so direct, so precise, that it is difficult to comment on it: the poet's words and rhythms move through the mind like an arrow, hitting crisply the target of one's response.

The volume includes one long poem, a fine meditation addressed to Muhammad Iqbal (1873–1938), the Islamic poet and philosopher. In this poem all of Shabbir Banoobhai's themes are woven together. I conclude by quoting one of its fourteen stanzas:

We have lost the straight path  
Rather we chose not to follow it  
We prefer the narrow circle  
Of never-ending passiveness  
We would rather crawl than walk  
Rather let the fire burn out  
Than rub together the flints of struggle and pain  
To produce the life-giving spark  
Rather fade like flowers in the heat  
Then set fire to ourselves  
And consume that which would consume us  
We would rather be ash than fire. □



# DURBAN'S HOUSING IN CRISIS

by Crispin Hemson, Durban City Councillor

The Durban City Council's housing programme is under pressure on two fronts: a series of conflicts with Indian and Coloured tenants culminating in a rents boycott, and rising costs that are making the provision of houses for most applicants almost impossible. I wish to outline the background to the present position.

Until recently, the Council's programme for Indian and Coloured housing has been a response to the situation brought about by Government action. The extent of the housing estates, particularly Chatsworth and Phoenix, may lead one to see the housing programme as the creation of a vast new housing stock. This is not yet so. Until Phoenix was established, the houses built have been merely replacing the great number of houses lost through the implementation of the Group Areas Act.

The fundamental grievance, that housing was taken from people, thus obliging independent residents to become tenants of mass housing schemes, remains to engender continual conflict over housing policy. It is an ever-present factor in the protests of the communities.

## THE LAST 20 YEARS

The Council's housing programme of the last two decades illustrates this factor and the series of difficulties and errors which have led to the present impasse. The Council began Chatsworth in 1963 to house people displaced from Cato Manor, Greyville and other areas declared White. Today it is a huge suburb of increasing diversity, with an estimated population of about 160 000. Its comparative attractiveness because of its lower rentals and relatively convenient location must not hide the fact that the Indian community as a whole have never accepted the need to move there when the majority had been living in adequate accommodation.

'They had been living in areas with their own religious, social and cultural institutions, and in the joint family system. Their land had room for fruit trees and they lived close to town. There was a spirit of community. In comparison, people don't feel they are living in Chatsworth as human beings. They moved to a monotonous environment. The lack of amenities and the presence of gangsterism induces those that can afford it to sell and move elsewhere.' (one of the members of the Durban Housing Action Committee).

After Chatsworth the Council's programme was nearly halted as Government allocations were cut back in the early 1970s. But new housing applications did not stop. By 1974 the Council began pushing for more funds, initially for Coloured housing. The Coloured community in Durban have been particularly afflicted by an inadequate allocation of land, and immigration into Durban was exacerbating the shortage of homes. The Council responded, but made several errors as a result of the lack of proper consultation.

The first project was a set of three tower blocks in Sydenham, of the kind even then being condemned elsewhere as socially disastrous. High-rise flats are the least popular

housing option for most tenants, and the erection of the blocks has caused tremendous resentment.

Another scheme required the expropriation of homes in Sparks Estate. The scheme was then found to be economically unviable, and there is still conflict over what can be done with the land.

Since then sections of the Newlands East Scheme have been completed. Only half the land can be developed for housing purposes, because of steep slopes and the presence of ecca shale. Its location, the high rentals and lack of basic amenities have led to a militant mood amongst residents.

Improvements in amenities have been achieved in the other schemes, however. Durban's present Mayor, Sybil Hotz, campaigned vigorously for more and better facilities during her term as chairperson of the Health and Housing Committee. A Community Facilities levy on tenants has financed sportsgrounds, libraries, swimming pools and community halls. It was introduced to improve the acceptability of the schemes, but tenants are often unhappy that they must pay for these amenities, some of which are normally borne by the Rates Account.

In 1975 construction of houses began in Phoenix, a new housing area north of the city which is planned to be larger than Chatsworth. By mid 1986 over 28 000 houses should have been completed. It is superior in amenities to Chatsworth, but has similar problems of community dislocation, and much higher rents, as well as high transport costs for most tenants. An attempt to excise Phoenix from Durban was made by the Council in 1977, as part of a process of removing large Indian areas from the city. At the time this process had, it seems, the support of local, provincial and national government, but it met with determined and, so far, successful opposition from tenants and other voluntary organisations. The opposition to autonomy was the forerunner to a series of protests on housing.

An obstacle to our housing programme has been the extent of land held by the Department of Community Development, with a municipal valuation of roughly R24 million. Two former residential areas, Cato Manor and Block A in Greyville, have thus been sterilized for years. Cato Manor will eventually be released for Indian occupation, though the extent of ecca shale will limit its potential for development.

## THE CONFLICT AND ITS CAUSES

Since 1979 there have been increasingly vigorous protests, culminating in a rents boycott in March 1981. A working committee was set up by the Housing Committee of the Council. It includes representatives of the Durban Housing Action Committee, which was formed from the various ratepayers' associations. The purpose is to improve conditions in housing schemes, but progress has so far been slow. DHAC is pushing for rental reductions, subsidisation of housing, and an initiative to pressure the Government into changing its housing policy.

It is clear that large numbers of tenants support the protests, although the rents boycott is the first test of strength for

DHAC. It seems that the factors giving rise to the new toughness among residents of housing schemes are these:

1. The continued implementation of the Group Areas Act, as I have mentioned.
2. Increased expectations aroused by Government statements.

Shifts in Government policy and its desire to meet some of the demands of conservative Black leadership have led to statements that seemed to promise improvements. Circulars 9 and 10 of 1980 appeared to have the effect of reducing rentals. In fact the net effect on "basic rentals" in Durban was a decrease of 3,3% (basic rental refers to interest and redemption on the money borrowed from the National Housing Commission), while tenants in the large R150-250 group suffered large increases.

3. The high costs of recent schemes.

Although the Council's rent increases in 1980 were limited to a maximum of 15%, and no increases had been made in 1978-9, they were enough to cause great resentment. Protests emerged mostly in areas such as Phoenix and Newlands East where rentals were already much higher than in other areas. It must be remembered that tenants who had been living in cheap older housing — e.g., site rentals in Tintown had been R2,40 monthly — faced great absolute increases in their housing costs by moving to new schemes, and many still do. Their incomes have not increased correspondingly. In addition, the location of the new schemes imposes high transport costs on most tenants.

4. The lack of political representation.

A powerful element in the protests has been the conflict over who represents the communities. The Local Affairs Committee system, promoted assiduously by the Government, even in opposition to the wishes of the LAC members, is increasingly unworkable. The forces opposed to the original imposition of the system have strengthened. In Newlands East no-one was nominated for two vacancies on the Coloured LAC, and the Administrator had to appoint two outsiders. In Chatsworth, LAC members may no longer serve on the Southern Durban Civic Affairs Federation. DHAC claims that it alone represents residents of housing schemes.

The lack of representation in local government has meant that the communities have been powerless to fight for a reasonable allocation of the resources of the city through the electoral process.

5. The political resurgence of the Black communities.

This was described to me as the awakening of a people who felt too insecure in the 1960's to challenge what was happening to them. Anyone who has had to work in a committee with the new political leadership knows how vigorous the forces now being unleashed are.

6. The long-standing mistrust of the Council.

Much of the conflict has shown the depth of the antipathy felt towards the City Council. One has only to read the early ethno-centric White accounts of Durban's establishment to realise how immediately White hostility to the Indian settlers arose. The City Council reflected this attitude for many years, for example, in the restrictions it placed on Indian trading in the 1890s. Even in 1980 some councillors claimed that the presence of cars and TV sets in Phoenix proved that protests based on poverty are fallacious (the statistical evidence produced was ignored). The persistent anti-Indian agitation among Whites in

Durban has forged a deep mistrust which has had no difficulty in finding fresh evidence. The protesters believe that there has been little fundamental change:

"There is a genuine and fully justified belief in the minds of our people that the authorities and more particularly the Durban City Council are not making any serious attempt to understand their problem and in many instances do not care about their problems." (Mr D. K. Singh, chairman of the DHAC).

What lies ahead?

So far I have examined the political dimensions of the conflict: there are other pressures on the housing programme that are not directly political.

A revision of the Council's application lists has led to a sharp cutback on new Coloured housing. There are fears in the Council that a similar position may result with Indian housing, and that before long tenants will begin to refuse houses that they do not like. Meanwhile the long-term planning goes on apace. In parts of Phoenix North services are complete, and work has begun in Newlands West, another extensive area.

Increased costs are leading to a reduction of standards in new housing. There was a gradual process of raising standards in new schemes which is to be reversed, and house sizes are likely to be reduced. Meanwhile, the Council is approving tenders which will result in rentals that very few tenants can afford, banking on an increase in earnings of applicants by the time the houses are available.

What resolution is possible?

There are several options open to the Council in its response to the challenges posed by increased costs and housing protests.

**'Self-help' housing:** Logically, constantly reduced standards must lead to site-and-service housing, if the Council agrees to relax certain building bylaws in housing areas. This is no easy option. The cost of a serviced site has risen alarmingly, and is perhaps highest in Durban, where the topography pushes up costs. An effective scheme would require thorough organisation to ensure that houses are erected without delay and at genuinely lower costs. There is however a great deal of support for this in the Council. It would make use of the skills of the hundreds of small builders who are currently excluded from participation in housing by the vast size of the contracts, which have given rise to nearly monopolistic conditions.

**Home ownership:** Many houses that were once 'sub-economic' are being sold, and there are proposals to promote selling rather than renting. The advantages to the Council include reduced administration and maintenance costs, and to the tenant increased security.

**Ending the Council's programme:** Several councillors believe the Council is administering policies over which it has little control, but for which it is blamed. They would prefer the Government to take full responsibility for housing, while the Council would ally itself with the tenants and applicants in pushing for a better housing policy.

**A separate housing department:** This is one of the aims of the present Housing chairperson, Lesley Sprague. Housing would be controlled by one Council department, instead of construction by one department, administration by another, and so on. The result should be greater efficiency and fewer bureaucratic obstacles.

I do not know if agreement between the Council and the tenants is possible at this stage. The gap between the two sides is great, especially on such issues as subsidisation. It is inevitable that rising costs must lead to increased rentals, and this may cause further conflict at least in some areas. Ultimately, though, a rational housing programme is possible. I believe it would encompass a much greater diversity of styles, from squatter upgrading through to formal housing schemes.

There would need to be extensive subsidies for the poorest groups, but economic conditions should be such that as many people as possible should be fully represented in the authorities that determine and execute housing policy.

Such a programme is perhaps not possible yet, but the fact that people are beginning to demand a say in the way that they are housed means we are moving in a positive direction.

Footnotes to Organised Black Political Resistance, 1912 – 1950 on pages 10 – 13.

28. Communist Party of South Africa, Johannesburg District, *Communism and the Native Question*, Johannesburg, n.d. (c. 1935).
29. Simons, H.J. & R.E., *op cit*, p. 484.
30. Further detail can be found in Bunting, B., *Moses Kotane: South African Revolutionary*, London: Inkululeko Publications, 1975.
31. Carter G. and Karis T., *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. I., *ibid* p. 310.
32. *Ibid*.
33. Opposition to the legislation is discussed in Haines, R. 'The Opposition to General Herzog's Segregation Bills' in University of the Witwatersrand Development Studies Group, *Conference on the History of Opposition in Southern Africa*, January, 1978.
34. See for examples: Stadler, A., 'Birds in a Cornfield: Squatter Movements in Johannesburg' in *Journal of Southern Africa Studies*, Vol. 6, no. 1, October 1979; Stadler, A., 'A Long Way to Walk: Bus Boycotts in Alexandra, 1940 – 1945', University of the Witwatersrand African Studies Institute seminar paper, 1979; O'Meara, D., 'The 1946 African Mine-workers' Strike' in *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. 13, no. 2, July 1975; Webster, E.C., 'The 1949 Durban Riots' in Bonner, P.L., *Working Papers in Southern African Studies*, Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1977; Gerhart, G.M., *Black Power in South Africa*, Los Angeles: University of California, 1978, Chapters 2 and 3; Davie, K., 'Capital, Labour and the South African State', University of the Witwatersrand African Studies Institute seminar paper, 1979.
35. See Simkins, C.E.W., 'Agricultural Production in the African Reserves of South Africa', University of the Witwatersrand African Studies Institute seminar paper, 1980.
36. See report in *Daily Dispatch*, (East London), 25 1946, p. 10
37. Gerhart, G., *op cit*, p. 41.
38. Carter, G. and Karis, T., *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. II, p. 305.
39. The developing relationship between the CPUSA and the ANC is described in Brooks, A., *From Class Struggle to National Liberation, the CPUSA, 1940 – 1950*. University of Sussex, 1970.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Chairman: Peter Brown  
 Vice-Chairman: Alan Paton  
 Board: N. Bromberger, M. Corrigan, M. Dyer, C. Gardner,  
 S. Msimang, J. Passmore, P. Rutsch, J. Unterhalter.

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Send to: Reality, P.O. Box 1104, Pietermaritzburg 3200, R.S.A.

RATES (6 issues—published every two months)

**N.B. SUBSCRIPTION RATES HAVE INCREASED.**

ORDINARY SUBSCRIBERS	DONOR SUBSCRIBERS
S.A. R3,00 p.a.	S.A. R10,00 p.a.
U.K. £2,00 p.a.	U.K. £5,00 p.a.
U.S.A. \$4,00 p.a.	U.S.A. \$15,00 p.a.



# REVIEW OF J. M. COETZEE'S "WAITING FOR THE BARBARIANS"

by John Passmore.

One cannot help but admire J.M. Coetzee for his ability to circumvent many of the problems which afflict a large number of South African writers.

These problems stem from the fact that the process of political polarization in South Africa has reached such a point as to lay the heaviest possible stress on a writer's ideological commitment. Despite the fact that the terms "radical", "liberal" and "conservative" contain within themselves a variety of meanings, they have come to assume an almost claustrophobic power when it comes to analysing works of literature in this country. South African novels, plays and poems undergo a process of the most intense academic scrutinization in terms of ideology and reaction. The reason for this lies in the fact that the areas of conflict in South African society are relatively clearly defined. The need of the politicized South African to take a firmly coherent ideological stance leads to (to coin a crude phrase) 'stances adopted in the name of ideological specifics'.

A brief examination of political and semi-political American literature and films will (I hope) clarify my point. A whole body of 'anti-establishment' American literature sprang to life in the 1950's. Spearheaded by 'beat' luminaries such as Kerouac, Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti this movement (as well as its British counterpart – Osborne and Colin Wilson – the Angry Young Men) aimed at liberating itself from the shackles of WASP – fuelled America / suburbia / materialism and the greyly authoritarian bent of the Eisenhower years. The influx of 'beat' poems, novels and plays into the mainstream of American literature had a healthy and invigorating effect. The inadequacies of the American dream were (at times) cruelly and cleverly exposed. The aim, very often, was true.

Where beat literature fell down though, was in its inability to pinpoint the way out of the American morass. The movement soon got bogged down in a hazy and very generalized vision of an 'alternative' American dream. By 1969 the whole movement was lost, amidst the dreary meanderings of the dourly 'with-it' Woodstock generation. In modern South Africa such generalized literary stabs at an alternative society would, more than likely, be dismissed as meaningless fantasy which has its roots in the escapist tendencies of affluent white liberals or in the disco dreams of a rising black middle class currently engaged in flirting with the 'positivism' of the Black Consciousness movement. Polarization does breed a hardening of attitudes and an insistence on ideologically correct expositions and evocations of the South African 'reality'. Liberal and radical South African writers, readers and critics often feel themselves compelled to take a stand for their particular ideological viewpoints to an extent which the American literati of the beat era didn't.

The American trilogy of Vietnam movies ("Coming Home", "The Deer Hunter" and "Apocalypse Now") provide striking examples of problems thrown up by ideological assessments.

In America "Coming Home" and "The Deer Hunter" were by and large well received. In South Africa initial reaction to both these movies divided (predictably enough) along the lines of liberal and radical ideological opinion.

A number of liberals felt that "Coming Home" and "The Deer Hunter" were brilliant expositions of the futility and ultimate tragedy of war. The relatively simple accounts of the effects of the Vietnam war on ordinary American citizens who had the misfortune to become entangled in a military nightmare, were brilliant in that they reinforced the liberal detestation of violence and crass inhumanity.

Radical opinion held that the two films were subtle and effective attempts at assuaging American guilt. They felt that the incorporation of the Woodstock "peace and love" theme did away with the need to take American involvement in Vietnam to its logical conclusion, viz., the attempted rape of a country in order to gain political and economic hegemony over it. The humanization of Americans in "Coming Home" and "The Deer Hunter" has the effect of leading the viewer to believe that Americans were victims of the war rather than perpetrators of latter-day genocide. As for "Apocalypse Now". Well, it certainly probed deeper than either of the other two films. The message of the film still left the onlooker confused as to the film's ultimate point. We all know that war can make monsters of us and can lead to a situation whereby human-beings can believe themselves to be gods.

Coetzee's novel arrives at a time when the South African liberal/radical debate is sharpening. As I have traced something of the nature of the debate, let me turn to the novel itself. An old magistrate is caught up in a conflict which threatens to lead to the most disruptive and tragic polarization imaginable. For years he has allowed himself to float on the surface of nineteenth century South African life . . .

"We do not have facilities for prisoners," I explain. There is not much crime here and the penalty is usually a fine or compulsory labour . . .".

The touches of humanity he evinces at the outset of the novel (the above extract serves as a good example) succeed in lulling him into a sense of complacency as regards his own specific position in the frontier scheme of things. The comfortable and relatively humane world he has succeeded in creating around him insulates him from the great reality of his day, viz. that the Empire has made devastating and unwarranted inroads into the communal and individual life of the 'barbarians'. The arrival of Colonel Joll, special designate of the Third Bureau, destroys his complacent world and leads him along the thorny paths of self-analysis and personal commitment. The terrible consequences of an ideology of power, determined to arrive at its own perception of the world at the expense of all other perceptions, is brought home to the magistrate during the course of Joll's interrogations –

“ . . . Imagine : to be prepared to yield, to yield, to have nothing more to yield, to be broken, yet to be pressed to yield more! And what a responsibility for the interrogator How do you ever know when a man has told you the truth?”.

From that point Coetzee takes the reader to the moment when burgeoning doubt unfolds into outright (and horrifying) revelation,

“But alas, I did not ride away : for a while I stopped my ears to the noises coming from the hut”.

The magistrate’s long and semi-erotic relationship with a crippled black girl (the victim of Joll’s quest for the truth) highlights another aspect of Coetzee’s art viz. when one realizes that one’s perception of reality is distorted how does one attempt to deal with the knowledge that other realities exist ‘out there’?

The perverse relationship the old magistrate has with the young girl is a relationship based on the desire to come to grips with the hitherto unknown. Small wonder that the affair between the two is something of a “hit and miss affair” in which desire and feelings and longings cannot materialise into concrete form or even attain a reasonable level of articulation.

What the magistrate cannot grasp at the outset of his rebellion is the fact that his attempt at assimilating a new reality — a new perspective — can only occur at the level of dissolution. He cannot grasp the consequences of listening to the noises emanating from the granary without putting his own process of socialisation on trial. His refusal to comply with the practices the empire deems necessary to protect its interests leads him (subtly at first) to the brink of degradation. He yearns for the peace and order of the old without realising that “peace and order” in nineteenth century South Africa can only exist within the framework of overall racial and economic harmony.

His long and nightmarish journey undertaken in the hope of restoring the girl to her people (and thereby restoring some form of humane order) is interpreted by his masters as constituting an act of betrayal. The tortures and humiliations he is subjected to by the agents of the Third Bureau are necessary from the empire’s point of view because any opposition to the empire must be made to seem ridiculous.

In the final part of the book, Coetzee places his finger accurately on the great tragedy of South Africa. Greed and

fear translate themselves into a war mentality. Joll’s expeditionary force — his army of conquest — is badly beaten. That the nomads of the interior should respond in such a fashion to a brutal act of violence is hardly surprising. The reaction of the frontier whites — blind panic — reveals just how the oppressor views a socio-military setback. The townspeople flee (convinced that barbarian hordes are about to attack) and, irony of ironies, the magistrate is, once again, effectively in charge. The “barbarians” attempt at self-preservation is translated by the frontier whites as a horrendous attack. A lack of perspective leads to fear and even more misery.

At the beginning of this review, I said that Coetzee has managed to circumvent many of the usual problems facing a large number of South African writers. His ability effortlessly to present many different perspectives is nothing short of brilliant and makes “Waiting for the Barbarians” the fine book it is.

What Coetzee’s ultimate aim is, however, one cannot say.

Two extracts from the book highlight this problem. In the first extract the old magistrate says: “Empire has located its existence not in the smooth recurrent spinning time of the cycle of the seasons, but in the jagged time of rise and fall, of beginning and end, of catastrophe.”

This statement seems to preclude all forms of conflict. Even the nomads have indulged in wars to gain their briefly enjoyed independence and natural harmony. Conflict is inescapable, and socio-economic conflict is as old as mankind itself.

The magistrate’s final comment is: “I leave it feeling stupid, like a man who lost his way long ago, but presses on along a road that may lead nowhere.”

Is a sense of defeatism implied here, or does Coetzee imply that the struggle for justice is in itself sufficient hope for the future?

One is not quite certain and maybe Coetzee intends it that way. What is certain is the fact that this remarkable book will be the subject of considerable debate amongst liberal and radical readers. Coetzee’s ability to portray South Africa through the different perspectives of its inhabitants lends to his work a depth no other white South African writer has. □

# RICK TURNER'S CONTINUING CHALLENGE

A Review of "The Eye of the Needle: Towards Participatory Democracy in South Africa", by Richard Turner.

Ravan Press.

by Colin Gardner

When Rick Turner's *The Eye of the Needle* appeared in 1972 it made a considerable stir in liberal and radical circles. What was striking about the book was its approach to the age-old and ever-new problem of the South African socio-politico-economic situation — the deadlock. Instead of locating itself firmly in the midst of the current dilemma, and offering a few tentative or desperate proposals, the book made a point of looking at the problem, and at what is implied by the problem, from what one might call the middle distance. It offered analyses and models of the relationship between social formations and the individual (here one was conscious of the influence of structuralist thinking), of the human capacity to re-form both the personality and society (here the principal influence was Sartre), and of a new South African participatory democracy (the thinking which lay behind this was both socialist and Christian).

The book invited its readers, then, to stop agonizing about the huge dark trees which seem to block one's path and one's vision in every direction and to begin to get an overall view of the wood itself. Turner put forward not only a new spatial perspective, however; he also proposed a different view of the time-scale. He invited his readers to see the present as history.

*The Eye of the Needle* was — and is — a most thought-provoking book. Every page presents ideas, perceptions, insights, hypotheses that both challenge the mind and open up the possibility of present or future action, whether psychological, intellectual or social. I am not myself convinced by every one of Turner's themes and strategies; a few aspects of the paradigm he puts forward seem to me partly to contradict others. But in one sense that is unimportant: his work stands as a gateway to fresh, lively, analytical and generous thinking about South Africa and its future.

The book appeared in 1972. (Incidentally it received two

reviews, one by the present writer, in *Reality* Vol. 4 No. 6, 1973). In February 1973 Rick Turner was banned, and his book went officially out of circulation. In January 1978, shortly before his banning order was due to expire, he was — appallingly — assassinated; and South Africa lost, in all too symbolic circumstances, one of her most talented and creative citizens.

*The Eye of the Needle*, reissued now by Ravan Press (the successor of Spro-cas, the original publisher), is not quite the same phenomenon as it was when it first saw the light. The text itself is almost unaltered (Turner revised it slightly for a 1978 U.S. version), but the frame is different. As we read it now, in the early 1980's we are aware that many significant events have taken place recently in Southern Africa, each adding its own flavour — sometimes corroboratory, sometimes perhaps rather less so — to Turner's text: the collapse of the Portuguese resistance to the liberation-armies in 1974, the Soweto disturbances in 1976, the continuation of the South African Government's homelands policy, Rick Turner's death in 1978, Zimbabwean independence in 1980.

The text also has a new frame in another, more tangible sense. It is preceded by a full and excellent biographical introduction by Tony Morphet. And it is followed by a Postscript by Turner himself. Written in 1973, it represents his desire to move from what I've called the middle distance and to confront some of the immediate problems of the South African situation. It is a remarkable piece of writing, which is in most respects surprisingly undated. In the course of a complex analysis of the forces at work in South Africa, Turner shows that — radical as he was in his essential thinking — he was prepared to favour and support every kind of creative and purposive move towards change.

This second edition of *The Eye of the Needle* is a book that every thoughtful South African should possess. □