

A JOURNAL OF LIBERAL AND RADICAL OPINION

Vol 13 Nos 5

# reality

S.A.I.R.R.  
REFERENCE

September 1981

50 cents



## in this issue . . .

EDITORIALS	1. The Police . . . . .	2
	2. Fatima Meer - Again . . . . .	3
ADDRESS CHALLENGED	by Alan Paton . . . . .	3
THE POLICE AND THE PUBLIC	by Terence Beard . . . . .	4
CONSTRUCTIVE INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA	by Hendrik W. van der Merwe . . . . .	8
TOO DESPAIRING	by Paul Malherbe . . . . .	10
FOSATU	by John Passmore . . . . .	11
THE FATTIS AND MONIS DISPUTE	by James Leatt . . . . .	13
BOOK REVIEWS : The Apartheid Regime and Racial Domination	ed Price and Rosberg reviewed by Francos Antonie . . . . .	17
Armies of the Night	by M G Whisson - A review of Black Villagers in an Industrial Society ed Mayer . . . . .	

Cover photographed by Joe Alfors

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

# EDITORIALS

## 1. THE POLICE

In this number of REALITY we carry the first part of a long article on the police. It comes at an appropriate time. The British police, the model for all the rest of us, have had to contend with widespread rioting, something with which they have never expected to have to deal. And much of it has been aimed against them.

In some areas there has been bitter criticism of their conduct before and after the riots. All this has led to intense heart-searching at all levels of British society, not least amongst the police themselves, about what has gone wrong and how the damage already done to the image of the police can be repaired.

Although there has been a good deal of disagreement over the precise causes of the riots it is recognised that they are largely social and partly the result of a breakdown in communication between the police and the inner-city communities, many of whose members are black, where most of the riots have started. People in Britain have been talking about this communication breakdown for years, but it is obvious that hardly anything was done about it. It is a matter for urgent attention now.

Meanwhile, over in New Zealand, the anti-Springbok Tour demonstrations have placed their own strains on a police force whose traditions, as far as one can see, are very much British ones. The police there have been criticised for their handling of the disruption of the Hamilton game, but surely their attempt to remove the demonstrators from the ground by arresting them individually and taking them off to charge them one by one was the way for a civilised police force to act? Of course it was offensive to some people. Our own Brigadier "Rooi Rus" Swanepoel, head of Johannesburg's

Riot Squad, is reported to have said that, with just 20 of his men, he would have taught the demonstrators "a lesson they would never forget". We are sure he would have. Half-a-dozen snapping dogs, a dozen thudding batons, and the field would have been cleared, even if it took a fleet of ambulances to do it. In the process, of course, the New Zealand police would have been transformed into something they had never been before and the fabric of New Zealand society irreparably damaged. We sincerely hope that that does not turn out to be one of the more abiding results of that sad tour. For the difference between how the New Zealand police acted at Hamilton and how Brigadier Swanepoel thinks they should have acted is surely the difference between how a police force should act and how it should not.

One of the most marvellous scenes in the television report on the royal wedding was that of the police controlling the enormous crowd which converged on Buckingham Palace --- no force, no tension, no illhumour. How many of the six or seven hundred million people who were reported to have watched that film would not have given their right arms to live in a country with a police force like that? Unfortunately a large part of the world lives with police forces which aren't like that at all, but which are feared and hated by most of the people they are supposed to protect.

The myth of the British Bobby as the near perfect policeman has suffered a good deal in these recent months. Those wedding scenes showed that the basis for the myth is still very much alive. It is very important for Britain that it should survive this present crisis. And it is very important for us too. For if the British police were to become not much different from all the rest, what would there be left for us, and others, to aspire to? □



## 2. FATIMA MEER — — — AGAIN

Five years ago Fatima Meer was banned for five years. REALITY had a leader about that ban, which asked one question --- Why? We haven't had the answer yet.

This year, the ban was renewed for a further five years. Without expecting an answer we ask the same question --- Why?

Is it because Mrs. Meer successfully fought a prosecution brought against her for allegedly breaking her ban by attending a dinner party? Or is it because she is now contesting another prosecution, for allegedly having been out of the area to which her order confined her, and on the premises of an educational institution, where the order said she shouldn't be? We don't know.

Has somebody made a mistake? We ask because, on the day Mrs. Meer's old ban expired it was announced that banning orders on 24 other people had been lifted. How many mistakes had been made there?

As a matter of fact we don't think that Mrs. Meer has been banned by mistake, we think she has been banned on pur-

pose. And we think she has been banned because the Government didn't like the things she was saying when it banned her 5 years ago and thinks she may start saying the same kind of things again if it unbans her now. Which we are sure she would.

However, given that the Government has never liked the kind of things Mrs. Meer has said, and is not likely to now, it is still important that it should hear them. For, although her views may be radical by government standards, she has never wanted to drive every white person into the sea, she believes in a non-racial future which would offer hope and security to everyone (including those who presently ban her), and she can express in an articulate manner the aspirations of an important body of black opinion which shares her views.

She is just the kind of person a sensible Government would be listening to and talking to.

May the day when it can bring itself to do that come before this next five years is up. □

### GRADUATION ADDRESS CHALLENGED

(A letter addressed to the Editor of the Rand Daily Mail on 19-7-81)

Dear Sir

I apologise for so belatedly referring to an important news item which appeared in the RAND DAILY MAIL in April 1981, but I have not seen it until now. It is the Address given on 14 April at the Graduation Ceremony at the University of the Witwatersrand by Mr. Allister Sparks, then editor of the RAND DAILY MAIL. The Address is a tribute to the "liberal institutions" of the second half of this century, and to the great influence which they have exerted on the current politics of our country, although the institutions themselves were despised, maligned, and often regarded as subversive. The argument of the Address is one of which I wholly approve.

At one point in his speech Mr. Sparks lists these "liberal institutions". They are the Institute of Race Relations, the Black Sash, the Christian Institute, the Council of Churches, NUSAS, Polstu, Helen Suzman and van Zyl Slabbert, Wits, UCT, and the RAND DAILY MAIL. But I was astounded to read that he made no mention of the Liberal Party which was the political pioneer of the very causes that Mr. Sparks both lists and approves.

I have been a loyal member of the Institute for over 40 years, and a loyal supporter of the Black Sash for nearly 30, and would not denigrate either of them. But it is a fact of history that neither of these organisations paid more than a fraction of the price that had to be paid by the Liberal Party for the maintenance and propagation of its principles.

I am an admirer of Dr. van Zyl Slabbert, and a profound admirer of Mrs. Helen Suzman. But it is a fact of history that neither of them was called upon to pay the price paid by Mr. Peter Brown, who paid ten years of his life for his chairmanship of the Liberal Party, and his refusal to keep silent, or to desist from the attempt to win sup-

port for the policies and principles which Mr. Sparks so much admires. He was one of the many in the Liberal Party who paid a heavy price for his endurance, though none paid so heavily as he.

Why did Mr. Sparks then omit all mention of the Liberal Party? If it was intentional, it was unforgivable. If the omission was unintentional, it was reprehensible in a speaker who was purporting to give an account of the liberal struggle of the second half of the century. He was delivering an important address at an institution which has always been a supporter of liberal values and principles, but what is more, at an institution devoted to the pursuit of truth.

The Liberal Party was outlawed by the Prevention of Political Interference Act in 1968. It held its last Johannesburg meeting in the Darragh Hall, and the RAND DAILY MAIL reprinted (verbatim if I remember correctly) the final address of the National President of the Party, who at that time was myself. Mr. Lawrence Gandar paid high tribute to the Party in an editorial that was a consolation to many of us.

It would appear that a generation has arisen that knows nothing of these things.

Yours faithfully  
Alan Paton.

#### FOOTNOTE:

The Rand Daily Mail declined to publish the above letter for two reasons:

- i) that Mr. Sparks was out of the country
- ii) that the matter was now some months old.

I am glad to say that the Editorial Committee decided to publish my letter and this footnote. For historical reasons alone, Mr. Spark's defective account must be challenged.

# THE POLICE AND THE PUBLIC\*

## – PART I

by Terence Beard

The South African Police have never been more in the public eye than they have been during the past few years. Reports featuring police activities appear daily in newspapers of all political persuasions, and items featuring or involving the police occur regularly in the S.A.B.C. radio and television news reports. South Africans cannot therefore but be aware of the extent to which police activities have increased over the years. Owing to the very nature of police functions and duties, the extent and frequency of their activities are a fairly reliable indicator of the health of a society. The greater the scope and extent of police activities, the greater is the incidence of crime or civil disorder, or both, likely to be. Attempts on the part of governments to curb reports on police activities must therefore be seen as calculated to conceal from the public vital information concerning the health of the societies in which they live and carry on their daily lives. Another effect of such curbs is to partially conceal a corresponding deterioration in the relations between the police and the public, relations which are vital to the health of any society.

Despite the curbs placed upon the reporting of police activities in South Africa, shrouding certain of their activities in secrecy, and allowing in certain circumstances only officially cleared versions of these activities to be reported by the media, the reported incidence of police actions relating to social disturbances and discontent remains notably high. This fact alone suggests that the social and political stability which exists is maintained only at the cost of considerable police intervention. The nature of much of that intervention is well known to the public even if the precise details do not reach them. The South African Government has come to rely increasingly upon riot police and security police in order to maintain stability, which means that correspondingly it has to rely more and more upon the use of physical force and upon political detentions, bannings, and interrogations under duress as well as the punishment of 'political' crimes. Simultaneously the definitions of 'political' crimes have been extended to include *prima facie* innocent actions and activities, which, together with civil disturbances, are the main subjects of secrecy.

It may be stated as a general rule, with few if any exceptions, that the greater the extent to which police activities are shrouded in secrecy, the greater the extent of police powers and the scope and frequency of their activities will be. In countries where the police are most secret they are most active, and in the Soviet Union for example, they permeate every walk of life and every institution, and enjoy almost unlimited powers. It is also true that the more the police are protected by secrecy the less accountable to the public they are, and the less are individuals protected from the arbitrary use and outright abuse of power.

Police forces stand between the powerful and the powerless, the rich and the poor, those with high and those with low social status, as well as between the law-abiding and the law-breakers, for this latter relation is intimately connected in both simple and complex ways with the former relations. The study of the structures and functions of police forces is thus an important aspect, as well as providing an indicator, of the relations which exist between the higher and lower political, economic and social strata of societies. Police forces therefore reflect, to an extent which is seldom appreciated, the general social relations within societies.

In South Africa today it would be hard to find a single individual whose skin is not white who does not regard our police force with fear or dislike, if not hatred. The reasons for this are not hard to find, and **basically** are **not** the fault of the police force itself. When vital laws, laws which determine and affect the very basis of life of the overwhelming majority of people, are disliked and rejected as unjust and discriminatory, those who have the unenviable task of enforcing those laws are placed in an invidious position. The very performance of their duties itself entails unpopularity, and the more unpopular are the laws, the more unpopular is the police force likely to be. In the absence of reform or abolition of the unpopular laws, there will be a consequent need over time to employ ever greater degrees of physical force, embracing ever-growing numbers of people in order to achieve police objectives. Unpopular laws reflect the nature of the power and economic structures and the unequal distribution of material resources, so that confrontations between police and sections of the public are a function of social conditions and cannot but contribute to processes of polarization within society. Thus the 'agitator' theory of social unrest can be seen as naive, for 'agitators' are symptoms rather than the causes of social discontent and instability.

Under conditions of social discontent, of which networks of unpopular and discriminatory laws are almost always a sign, demands for greater police powers multiply, for the greater the powers which are accorded the police, the greater the impunity with which physical force can be employed. And secrecy of police activities is almost invariably an accompaniment of any increase in powers, fostering rumour-mongering, the further decline of police popularity, and a need to employ even greater degrees of physical force to achieve police objectives. Secrecy introduces incentives for the abuse of police powers, particularly where the 'agitator' theory of social unrest is accepted, for when the police arrest 'agitators' they believe they are holding people were it not for whom society would be relatively peaceful and stable. In contexts where already unpopular police have to contend with civil disturbances, only exceptional individuals among the police are likely to be able to resist feelings of antagonism towards disturbers of the peace who are known to harbour feelings of hatred and contempt towards them. The temptation to employ excessive force and to abuse police powers can become not only difficult to withstand but sometimes

\* I am particularly indebted to the writings of Charles Reith for many of the thoughts expressed in this article. Many of my own ideas too are developments from those of Reith.

over-riding. Secrecy is therefore not only undemocratic and indicative of contempt for the public, but a disservice to the police themselves, encouraging as it does the upholders of the law to regard themselves as being in some sense above the law and therefore not bound by it.

Increases in police powers involve corresponding decreases in the rights of citizens, police powers being directly related to citizen rights, and foremost among police demands are likely to be the abolition of **habeas corpus** and the introduction of detention without trial. All such demands involve citizens being deprived of protection from the abuse of power, for if they can be held without trial and denied access to lawyers, then possible abuses of power by the police become virtually uncontrollable. Allegations by detained persons against the police, claiming assault, torture, or other abuses of power, are difficult in principle to sustain if only the police themselves have access to detained persons. In the last resort the validity or otherwise of such allegations is likely to depend upon the word of a detained person against the word of the police; and if there is collusion among the police, it can rest upon the word of a single detainee against the words of several policemen. The mere fact that a person has been detained tends to be regarded as a factor vitiating against their veracity or trustworthiness. Miscarriages of justice become not only more possible but more probable under such circumstances, and miscarriages of justice tend to deepen and widen social cleavages and so contribute to processes of social polarization.

Supporters of government will frequently hold to the view that 'there is no smoke without fire' and that the police would not detain anyone without good reason, and that the convicted are without doubt guilty; while opponents will tend to believe that not only is there abuse of power, but that there is no possibility of redress against such abuse.

Among the opponents of the government the courts and the very system of justice itself will come under suspicion and will suffer in reputation for their impartiality. Police secrecy militates not only against justice being done but against it being seen to be done.

In circumstances such as those alluded to above, not only is police accountability to the courts and to the public eroded, but parliamentary accountability is also affected. Police secrecy is not compatible with parliamentary accountability, and as a consequence parliament will be denied information which citizens, let alone legislators, have a basic right to know. Formulae such as "It is not in the public interest . . ." become prefaces to replies to questions relating to police matters. Democratic practices and norms are fundamentally subverted as the whole process of erosion gains impetus and seemingly becomes **sui generis**. By tracing this process in detail one aspect of the slide to the authoritarian police state, together with the process of social polarization of which it is a function, can be documented.

As Brian Chapman writes : " The arbitrary use of police powers, brutality, spying, secrecy, the temptation to act as a law unto itself are characteristics inherent in every police system. They stem from the nature of police work . . ." But he adds: "It can well be remarked that although the potential for police abuse exists in all states, it is characteristic of civilized liberal democratic regimes that this potential, and the abuses, are kept under control. The knowledge of the potential is the key factor in causing common law countries to act with such circumspection whenever police powers are involved." (1)

It is of fundamental importance to distinguish between mili-

tary principles and goals and police principles and goals. Armies are formed and trained with the object of defeating the enemy, and to this end the maximum force is employed in order to achieve this goal in the shortest possible time. Armies are formed to defend states against the attacks of other states, and sometimes even to attack other states, and are not normally intended to be used against a state's own citizens, even though at times they indeed are. From the point of view of the state, civil war is the worst of all evils, for it is essentially an act of self-destruction, involving as it does citizens fighting fellow citizens and kin often fighting kin, destroying the very basis of the social fabric.

Armies are thus inherently unsuited to the role of keeping the peace within societies, and their **successful** use in this regard has in practice been restricted almost entirely to totalitarian societies where they have been employed, without regard for life or limb of citizens, in conjunction with totalitarian police apparatuses. Leaving the totalitarian case aside for the moment, the use of troops to quell riots and civil disturbances has been notoriously counter-productive. The spilling of blood, while perhaps restoring the peace temporarily, inflames passions and builds up resentment. Armies are not suited to the restricted role of restoring order, and it is possible to cite cases where troops have over-reacted, and limited peace-restoring exercises have escalated into the unbridled use of military force and brutality, where mobs have been dispersed but the flames of discontent have been fanned rather than quenched. Thus in England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the stage was on occasion reached where "even the sight of troops on the occasion of a riot was the pouring of oil on flames." (2)

Police forces, on the other hand, are specifically designed to prevent crime and to keep the peace within the state, and generally are to be seen as functioning in support of the community. Consequently police forces, in contrast to the military, generally have the aim of employing the minimum amount of physical force necessary to achieve these objectives. Civil disturbances thus pose a special problem, for neither the military nor the police are designed to cope with them. (This explains the formation of 'third forces' — riot-police or para-military police — in many countries). The military is unsuited because dealing with riots necessitates the use of unmilitary strategies and tactics, while police forces are unsuited **insofar as** the control and quelling of riots are perceived by the public as actions against rather than in support of the community.

Where the police enjoy popular public support riots can often be dissolved with a minimum of trouble and the use of very little force. This was exemplified in the Vietnam demonstration in London in October 1968 when demonstrators besieged the American Embassy, when what could easily have been a very ugly situation was dealt with by the Metropolitan Police, and ended with demonstrators and police linking arms together and singing **Auld Lang Syne**. The Washington Post commented "What did not happen, quite simply, was something which has occurred in every other major western country this year, a truly violent confrontation between angry students and sadistic police . . . British experience in building up a non-violent relatively gentle society seems of paramount importance to a world beset by police brutality and student nihilism." (3) The really important factor was rather the fact that the police were still regarded by the overwhelming majority of Londoners as servants of the community acting in support of the community, a crucial factor in determining police attitudes towards the public and enabling them to maintain public support and co-operation.



Where a close rapport between the police and the public does not exist, and where the police do not enjoy wide public support, the control of civil disturbances presents a real problem, for the use of force serves only to widen the gulf between the police and the public and civil disturbances may spread. It is to this kind of problem that we now turn.

When police forces have to function in conditions where basic laws do not enjoy popular support, and where public disaffection grows and with it the frequency of civil disturbances and riots, the governments in question are faced with dilemmas of fundamental importance. This is not of course to say that governments are always aware of the nature of the choices facing them, for very frequently they are not. But broadly speaking there are three **main** choices facing governments under these circumstances.

- 1) To approach police problems on an **ad hoc** basis, which will involve regular increases in police powers, greater secrecy, and the formation of 'Third Forces' such as riot-police squads or other para-military type police formations. The ever greater employment of physical force will be necessary as polarization of the community and popular discontent increase.
- 2) To develop a totalitarian police system under which order is achieved through the unbridled use of military force, and thereafter maintained by means of police terror supported by the military whenever necessary.
- 3) To introduce reform by eliminating unpopular laws and changing those political, economic and social conditions which underlie the disaffection and which the unpopular laws were established to maintain, and to accompany these changes by reform of the police system itself.

There is little doubt that the first alternative stands little chance of success. As has already been said, military force, or para-military force, may suffice to quell riots but serves to inflame passions and to foster and build up discontent and is one of the surest means of provoking further rioting. While para-military police formations may differ from the military in being specialists in riot control, they are equally susceptible to over-reaction and to unnecessarily excessive use of physical force, and thus suffer from the same defects as the military itself. The use of para-military police is counter-productive except in the short-term sense of restoring order, but as in the case of troops, a para-military unit "... can temporarily repress breach of law, but is powerless to provide, by itself alone, sustained observance of laws." (4) Para-military riot squads have been employed in countries such as France to quell student riots and have been successful only because they have had to deal with minority groups, and their employment even then has left in its wake bitterness and rancour which have still not been forgotten.

Where there is majority discontent the first alternative is almost certainly doomed to fail, and each and every time the para-military police succeed in restoring order, they succeed also in alienating and disaffecting more people. Thus disturbances are likely to become more frequent and more wide-spread. At the same time rioters and other disturbers of the peace become more intrepid and more violent. The scale of violence is therefore likely to escalate as both rioters and police increase their use of physical force. The result is a chain reaction which may either rapidly or gradually and sporadically gain momentum until the social fabric is irreparably damaged, and the stage eventually reached where the government no longer has firm control of the situation. Once this stage is reached conditions will have become so unstable that it is anybody's guess as to what might ensue, and the

cliché of a future "too ghastly to contemplate" might well become a reality.

The second and totalitarian alternative, of rule through fear and terror, pre-supposes complete unscrupulousness and a total disregard for human life, for it necessitates in the first place the use of military force to beat the populace into submission by indiscriminately destroying communities in which there are civil disturbances or, sometimes, even signs of opposition and resistance. This strategy is employed until it comes generally to be believed that the only alternatives to submission and compliance are death or transportation to a labour camp or its equivalent. Such a strategy, according to news reports, is at present being employed by the Russian military forces in Afghanistan. It was employed by Stalin in Russia itself, notably against the Kulaks, and later by the Russians in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, successfully in all three cases. Once the military have achieved their objectives and eliminated opposition, the rule of the police and the secret police is established permeating every nook and cranny of society and ensuring that no-one even gives an appearance of putting a foot wrong. And behind the police in all their manifestations stands the army ready to employ maximum force in the rather unlikely event that they might again be called upon to do so.

It is arguable that the totalitarian strategy is incompatible with the continuance of the system of private enterprise in cases where the disaffected sections of the community comprise a majority of the population as a whole, for not only is the task of subduing and rendering the populace compliant and docile likely to have crippling effects, but the system of control which will have to be imposed will place the market economy under severe strain. However that may be, should such a strategy be adopted by South Africa whose **apartheid** policies are under continual international scrutiny and attack, and whose regime is considered unrepresentative by most countries of the world, it would have dangerous repercussions. South Africa would become more isolated and even more of a pariah state, and would almost certainly have to face international sanctions. Under such conditions the difficulties of establishing a totalitarian regime over a large alienated and discontented majority and **maintaining** that control would be likely to prove insuperable. The indications are that the South African government is well aware of this and that it has adopted a complex strategy embodying elements of both the **ad hoc** and the totalitarian alternatives, for certain restraints are imperative if the limited and qualified support of the Western democracies, particularly the United States, is to be retained.

The third alternative is one in which democracy becomes the main goal, and with it the introduction of a democratic police force. The concept of a democratic police force is an interesting and relatively novel perspective from which to examine the notion of a democratic society.

The first condition for the continued existence of a democratic police force is that the bulk of the more important laws enjoy the support of the vast majority of the population. For this to be so it is essential, as a minimum requirement, that the legislators be responsible to the vast majority of the population, which in turn implies that the vast bulk of the population be enfranchised. For a democratic police force is possible only either in a democracy or, in the short term, under conditions where democracy is seen to be the pursued goal of government and a goal which citizens are reasonably confident of achieving fairly rapidly. Popular support for the government, or at least for its goals, would be essential, for

unless this were so a democratic police force would be unable to endure.

If it is assumed that one of the above two conditions obtains, the principles upon which a democratic police force would have to be based can appropriately be considered. Firstly such a force would be viable only with public approval, respect and support. The willing co-operation of the public is a **sine qua non** for the successful operation of such a force. Public co-operation is possible only if there is public support and respect for the laws, and if the public regard the police as an essential part of the community working on behalf, and for the general good, of the community.

For the police to maintain public respect and co-operation it is necessary that they demonstrate constantly their **absolutely impartial service to law, in complete independence of policy**, for once they are regarded as partial by any section of the community their position will have been compromised and the willing co-operation of that section forfeited.

It is essential that the police use physical force only when it is absolutely necessary, when persuasion fails, and even then only the minimum degree of physical force necessary to achieve a police objective. The main object of an efficient democratic police force is **the prevention of crime and disorder**, as an alternative to their repression by military force and severity of legal punishment, and it is obvious that this can only be achieved where there is general public support and approval both of the police and their functions. If the police are given this support and approval it becomes possible to entertain the idea of the police being **unarmed**, this being the ultimate test of both a stable and relatively contented community and of a democratic police force. **Only democratic police forces are able to go unarmed.** To send out unarmed policemen into communities which reject them would be rather like sending them defenceless into a lion's den. When the Metropolitan police in England were first formed, policemen were regularly assaulted and even kicked to death on the pavements, and only sheer persistence and dogged adherence to democratic principles enabled them eventually to earn public sympathy and ultimate success.

It is of the utmost importance that a democratic police force does not exceed its proper functions and that it does not even seem to be usurping the functions of the courts. It is not for the police to judge guilt or innocence or to mete out punishment, and impartiality and fairness are essential charac-

teristics of good police forces. The test of a good and efficient police force is the absence of crime and disorder and not, as is often assumed, the number of successful prosecutions.

Public support and favour cannot be maintained when a veil of secrecy is drawn between the police and the public. The police should not only be accountable to the public for their actions but they must be seen to be accountable. A good and efficient police force cannot exist without public scrutiny, for secrecy and malpractices go hand in hand.

Police forces which do not have public support are seen by the public as acting **against** the public rather than **with** the public **for** the public and **in the public interest**. This is perhaps the key to the whole question of police forces, for it involves the choice as to whether a police force is to constitute a barrier between the holders of power and those over whom they wield that power, a kind of body-guard for the ruling elite or the ruling class, or whether it is to constitute no more than a paid section of the public who give their "full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of the community welfare and existence." (5)

The right to protest is a vital right in any democratic society, and a democratic police force will welcome and defend the right to protest. For as Richard Clutterbuck has put it "Protest is necessary to maintain a fair rate of change in the face of entrenched interests in any society — both to further the will of the majority and to attain equity for minorities. If peaceful protest for either of these is forbidden, or if it never achieves results, violence is in the end certain to ensue, and **moral justification will be claimed for it.**" (6) And "The biggest single contribution to keeping protests peaceful is the existence of an unarmed police force, but in a potential riot situation an isolated unarmed policeman can only function if he is confident that the public accept responsibility for his safety as much as he accepts responsibility for theirs." (7)

And yet again: "Few experienced British policemen would wish to see protests and demonstrations stifled, not so much for idealistic reasons but rather because they are the most important safety valve in a democratic society. The police would rather see dissent expressed by public demonstration than have it build up into a more dangerous form of conspiracy or violence." (8)

*(to be continued)*

#### REFERENCES

- |                               |                             |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1) Brian Chapman, p93         | 5) Charles Reith, p163      |
| 2) Charles Reith, p53         | 6) Richard Clutterbuck, p11 |
| 3) Richard Clutterbuck, p28-9 | 7) Richard Clutterbuck, p24 |
| 4) Charles Reith, p19         | 8) Richard Clutterbuck, p25 |

#### EDITORIAL BOARD

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

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS:

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

RATES: (6 issues—published every two months)

#### ORDINARY SUBSCRIBERS

S.A. R3,00 p.a.  
U.K. £ 2.00 p.a.  
U.S.A. \$ 4,00 p.a.

#### DONOR SUBSCRIBERS

S.A. R10.00 p.a.  
U.K. £ 5.00 p.a.  
U.S.A. \$ 15,00 p.a.

# CONSTRUCTIVE INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

by Hendrik W. Van der Merwe, (with acknowledgments to Quaker Monthly)

In recent months many foreign observers have commented on the polarized nature of South African society, on the rigidity and intransigence of the white establishment and on the excessive inequality, injustice and oppression in my country. While I agree with the latter observations I find their diagnosis of polarization and intransigence to be inaccurate. In addition, I find that such interpretations lead either to despair and subsequent withdrawal or to violence.

Neither of these two responses appeal to me as a South African. Consequently, I would like to encourage people abroad to support our efforts to bring about change in a *constructive* way.

In my travels abroad as in South Africa I have encountered a growing sense of despair, hopelessness and cynicism. There is a feeling among liberals in South Africa and concerned people abroad that we are doomed to conflict, chaos and a bleak future. Positive steps such as the removal of discrimination, the improvement of working conditions, constitutional reform and the promotion of inter-racial contact are dismissed as 'too little too late'. This comment implies that there is a certain cut-off point in the process of change beyond which disaster will follow, that we have either already passed that point, or that it is now 'five minutes to midnight'. The consequence of this cynical attitude is a refusal to contribute anything in a positive or constructive spirit and to deride or even oppose such contributions.

While there are apparently insurmountable obstacles to an open and just society in South Africa, there are also important potentials for change, such as the political and socio-economic development of the black people, the climate of growing political awareness and rising expectations leading to protest. There is increased inter-racial contact, a re-orientation of white values and the erosion of the moral base of apartheid. Important structural changes resulting from urbanisation and modernisation have also made inroads on traditional behaviour patterns. And surely, there are voices pleading for moderation emerging from both sides of the conflict. When Bishop Desmond Tutu calls for full citizenship he *also* makes an equally strong plea for nonviolent change.

## Conscientious affirmation

Some people have become quite complacent since the government proclaimed its intention to move away from discrimination. There are people who actually believe that the government will willingly dismantle a system which it has built up over decades at tremendous cost and sacrifice. Although it is evident that from a white and Nationalist point of view we

are indeed moving away from traditional forms of racial discrimination, from a black point of view the process is terribly slow and very superficial.

During 1980 the Centre for Intergroup Studies published three books on racial discrimination and current developments in South Africa. Our research findings prove that while many concessions are being made, permits issued and regulations altered, the legal foundations of apartheid have not been disturbed. Our daily lives are controlled by a plethora of petty apartheid laws and regulations for which there is no moral justification. What is our personal responsibility in this regard?

When a system is as intransigent and laws remain as rigid as in our society, the public may resort to civil disobedience. But civil disobedience is by its very definition a negative act. My plea is for a more positive response which I would call conscientious affirmation. This does not necessarily require breaking any specific law; it requires affirmative demonstration of fellowship, love, tolerance and a commitment to peace and justice. There is ample scope for such affirmation within the law.

But for many of us that is not enough. There are too many archaic laws, some of which I find so morally objectionable that I cannot obey them with a clear conscience. A commitment to conscientious affirmation makes it impossible for me to apply for a permit (and then possibly be refused, as has happened in the past) to accommodate an African friend at my home.

Apartheid, as a policy of racial discrimination involving the violation of human rights, concerns people everywhere. Racial discrimination, in both legal and customary forms, degrades people in a particularly pernicious way by denying their equal humanity.

But apartheid is more than a moral issue of human rights, it is increasingly perceived as a case of socio-economic exploitation within a **system** or **structure** of inequality. It is also in this respect an international issue as apartheid in South Africa represents a microcosm of the world situation, reflecting the current North-South socio-economic contrasts. European and American countries are therefore involved both morally and structurally.

## A just and stable replacement for apartheid

In my travels abroad I have been struck by the powerful unifying *forces of opposition to the evils of racial discrimination*. But those of us concerned with the long term future of my



country must do more than just attack the present evils. We need to build the foundations for a stable future society. In this venture I hope it will be the *unifying forces of support for a just society* that will bind us together.

Political change in a society where there is so much injustice and inequality as in South Africa will not come easily or willingly. Significant pressures on the establishment will be required to bring about fundamental change. Since apartheid, as I defined it earlier, is an international issue, external pressures are inevitable. Yet external pressures pose a serious problem for the future political stability of our country. Should the government be brought to its knees primarily by external forces, it means the internal opposition, not having been strong enough to depose the ruling powers, will most likely be unable to form a stable replacement.

Rather than 'periodic fits of morality' we need a deep commitment to moral values such as justice, peace, freedom, etc. While I share the concern of many activists about the lack of moral commitment in some churches, I am equally concerned about an excessive commitment to *strategy* observable in some church circles.

By strategic commitment I mean commitment to a certain strategy (or method or means) in order to obtain a certain objective. Strategic commitment is an essential element to ensure success in any action programme and is not to be rejected, but there are major differences in emphasis and orientation between strategic and moral commitment.

The need for action forces us to formulate a more specific goal than the universalistic goals of justice and conciliation. Specific goals such as 'Black Majority Rule' or 'End Apartheid' require the necessary action programme or strategy designed to achieve those goals. Given a specific goal to be achieved in as short a time as possible the emphasis naturally shifts towards the means. In other words, strategy becomes important at the expense of principle. The focus on strategy rather than on ends often leads to a tendency to argue or assume that the ends justify the means, including (in the final resort) violence as in the case of a 'just' war or rebellion.

### Negative short-term goals are not enough

Because of the need to economize and to muster all forces, campaigners will focus on one rather than a range of means or options. This leads to excessive efforts to gain credibility or support for that specific strategy and unfortunately, accompanying efforts not only to reject but even to *discredit* other approaches and strategies.

Strategic commitment tends to oversimplify the issue, to narrow our scope of operation and to increase intolerance, and moral indignation helps to shape a negative short-term goal—that of destroying the object of our indignation.

On reading the booklet produced by the British Council of Churches in 1979 entitled *Political Change in South Africa: Britain's Responsibility* I was struck both by their formulation of a goal which I would describe as negative and short-term, and by the evidence of excessive strategic commitment.

The objective is described as 'the end of the apartheid system'. In a footnote and elsewhere in the text there is reference to the more long-term future but that issue is more or less avoided and shelved.

Being committed to such a **specific goal**, it follows naturally that the discussion of the means or options (see Section 5 of the booklet) is characteristic of what I described above as

excessive strategic commitment. While six options are listed, four are discussed in a fairly derisive way, a fifth, 'armed struggle' is reserved as a last resort, and only *one*, 'disengagement', is pursued.

Would it not make more sense to acknowledge and especially in church circles to encourage those who make their contributions according to their own insights, and perhaps even more long-term goals, laying the foundations for a stable future society to replace the present evil system?

I am not arguing against the politicization of religion or of the churches. Rather I am asking that the churches remain more goal-oriented, more open, more tolerant, more constructive than political pressure groups, without denying the latter their characteristic and vital roles.

### The South African establishment

The South African government or establishment is often described as racist and seen as a unitary force, united on all issues, especially on maintaining white superiority and white rule. This is an oversimplification which leads to the unrealistic, ineffective and largely destructive approaches which we find in the broad anti-apartheid movement.

Some years ago I interviewed a number of eminent Afrikaner Nationalist leaders whom I suspect of harbouring 'revolutionary' views. I was not surprised when they admitted that they believed in concepts which in those days were taboo in Nationalist politics — such as sharing power with blacks, the return of coloured people to the common roll, etc. These people were committed to fundamental reform but believed it could be achieved from within the Nationalist approach. They were not only conscious of the tremendous scope for reform within the law, but were also conscious of the very great flexibility in Nationalist policy and ambivalence among their colleagues, unknown to outside commentators. Since then I have been anticipating a political development similar to what has become known in Rhodesia as an 'internal settlement'.

While there is bound to be an increase of violence in South Africa before any meaningful change takes place, I do not believe we will go through a civil or race war before we arrive at an internal settlement (an interim measure) with a mixed cabinet and black prime minister.

If David Smith, the former deputy of Ian Smith in Rhodesia, could first co-operate with Bishop Muzorewa and then serve in the cabinet of Robert Mugabe, I am sure that a few of Pieter Botha's pragmatist cabinet members will not be found unwilling to make their contributions in similar fashion.

### The Challenge

There is a real danger that by accepting minor reforms and concessions by the present government we give credibility to the total system under which it operates, that we extend the regime and that potential opponents become complacent. The challenge to us is not to become obsessed with short-term negative goals, but to give credit where credit is due, and to be steadfast in pursuing the ultimate goals of justice and conciliation which cannot be achieved in a white-dominated South Africa. The danger is that the tremendous injustice in my country may arouse in us such moral indignation and negative reaction that we not only destroy the object of our indignation but may also destroy our future. □

# TOO DESPAIRING

by P. N. Malherbe

I have noticed that your publication invariably reveals a tone of despair that South Africa can ever achieve a non-racial society without going through a period of extreme violence. Your editorial "Poles Apart" (May 1981), with its highlighting of Nationalist and HNP lack of understanding is but the latest example of this kind of thinking.

I would like to put it to you that the tremendous upsurge of HNP support in the 1981 election is, in fact, a blessing in disguise. This breakthrough will undoubtedly continue, because however much we may disagree with HNP policy, it is far more honest than that of the Nationalists. In short, they are in favour of permanent white baasskap and are prepared to say so openly, whereas the Nationalists are not honest enough to make this admission. As P.W. Botha's cosmetic palliatives have not had the effect of improving South Africa's standing with the rest of the world, he is being discredited in the eyes of reactionary Afrikanerdom for showing weakness, in stark contrast with the granite-like firmness of past Nationalist leaders. Were Mr. Botha able to show that he is taking the country nearer to some kind of solution, the loss of his right wing would be compensated for by support from the other side, but this is clearly not the case; as long as the policy in fact (if not by admission) is baasskap, no solution is possible, and the next few years will see him losing many of his more intelligent supporters to the PFP.

With this background, it is entirely possible that after the next election, Parliament will look something like this:

NP 80  
PFP 52  
HNP 33

For those who think it is impossible for the HNP to go from nothing to 33 seats in one election, let me point out that in the 1981 election the average swing from NP to HNP in these 33 seats was 26,4% and an average swing of only 14,8% is now needed for the HNP to win them all. This prospect is most certainly already exercising the minds of many Nationalist MP's, and several of them can be expected to defect before the next election as the only means of political survival.

While the PFP will have its work cut out to double its Parliamentary representation, I believe that the prospect of breaking the Nationalist majority and achieving a balance of power should be sufficient to spur it to extraordinary efforts. The disarray into which Afrikaner Nationalism is now heading is moreover an important factor which would contribute to making the goal a realistic one.

The question which immediately arises is whether the NP will be able to rule with a minority in Parliament. I believe not,

because apart from anything else, a party which loses over 50 seats in an election will be so full of incriminations as to make a split inevitable. While it would be anathema for Nationalists to develop a working relationship with the PFP, the hate of its surviving parliamentarians for the HNP is likely to be much greater, with the result that the prospect of at least half (40% would be enough) opting for co-operation with the PFP would be reasonably good.

It would appear that the PFP has never seriously considered what to do on finding itself in such a situation, probably because the prospect seemed so remote. It would be shirking its duty, however, not to give the matter some earnest thought in the light of the 1981 election result. Differing so fundamentally in principle from the Nationalists, it would have to decide very carefully what conditions it sets for co-operation, because to sacrifice any of its ultimate goals would destroy its credibility. On the other hand, to insist on implementation of all its goals as a condition of co-operation would in effect be asking Nationalists to become Progs overnight, which is hardly realistic, however desirable it might be.

The participation of the PFP in a coalition should be seen as an important and necessary first step toward a non-racial South Africa, so that the PFP's election platform would logically contain a list of measures which would be included in that step. These measures would consequently represent a partial implementation of PFP policy, with some of the ultimate goals deferred for the time being.

The very fact that the PFP asks the electorate to support a partial rather than a total implementation of what it stands for will moreover increase its appeal, particularly among those voters who are generally sympathetic but who are frightened at the thought of instant change to a black electoral majority. This approach should in fact eliminate the NRP without any further effort, leaving the PFP free to do the main job of winning support away from the Nationalists.

I believe that you would do us all a great service by encouraging a debate on what conditions the PFP should lay down as the price of participation in a coalition. To set the ball rolling, I would suggest the following:

1. Coalition members must accept that the PFP's ultimate goals remain unchanged.
2. Nationalist MP's belonging to the Broederbond would have to resign from it before joining the coalition.
3. All race laws must be eliminated forthwith from the remaining homelands not yet independent and from their natural economic hinterland. (This measure is very much in line with Prof. J.A. Lombard's plan for Natal and the Quail Commission's recommendations for the Ciskei. Walvis Bay, already surrounded by sup-



posedly non-racial Namibia and a PFP constituency as of 1981, should also be included in this category).

4. Certain laws, such as the Mixed Marriages Act, should be repealed forthwith, over the whole country.
5. Parliament must grant all local authorities the right to suspend or repeal any race laws remaining in effect in areas under their jurisdiction. Cape Town, for example, could then immediately scrap the Group Areas and Separate Amenities Acts (unless, of course, these had already been eliminated under 4).
6. A representative National Convention must be called to make recommendations on the constitutional future of the country, but without any pre-conditions. The outcome might then form the basis for a subsequent election platform, and Bishop Tutu's forecast of a black Prime Minister within ten years might even become a peaceful reality.

I know from discussing this type of approach in the past with white liberals that they are very uneasy about it, particularly

insofar as it may be regarded as a compromise of principle which would lead to an alienation of black opinion. I can only say that such people should discuss the matter with blacks and not make the paternalistic assumption that they know the answer. My own finding is that blacks regard the politics of protest as irrelevant, and would greatly welcome a bold approach such as outlined above. They generally don't want violence anymore than whites do, but the past ineffectiveness of protest politics has merely made violence seem inevitable. In any event, as blacks obviously read this journal, let us hope that they will contribute their opinions to this dialogue.

Finally, I believe that those white liberals and radicals who reject the above approach should indicate an alternative peaceful route to non-racialism, which I for one would very much like to hear about. For if they were to reject it without offering an alternative, they will have to bear a heavy share of the blame for the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives which will of necessity be one of the consequences of violent change. □

# FOSATU

## Perspective on a non-racial trade union

by John Passmore

This article is the first in a series on South African non-racial trade union movements. The purpose of the article is to provide an introduction to FOSATU. Should the reader desire a more detailed and analytical study of FOSATU and non-racial trade union movements in general he/she should consult the South African Labour Bulletin.

"It is on men such as these that the South African economy ultimately rests; it is they that dig the diamonds, uranium, copper and platinum. The world gold market and thus, in part, the world's monetary system rests on them too, for it is they who dig the gold, as also the coal to provide electricity for the gold mines. They are the unsung (and poorly paid) heroes of every Anglo-American report, every de Beers balance sheet; it is the fruits of their labours which have, over the years, filled the vaults of Fort Knox, bought race-horses for the Oppenheimer family, endowed Rhodes Scholarships, and provided Elizabeth Taylor with her jewellery".

(from "How long will South Africa Survive" by R. W. Johnson)

"Mechanisms are proposed by means of which all systematic changes that are in any way significant can be introduced gradually and circumspectly, thus limiting the possibilities of disruption"

(from the Wiehahn Commission report on existing labour legislation)

"This (labour integration) was not National Party policy and, if it should be allowed, it would create an extremely dangerous situation. We must remember that we have in this country a labour situation that could lead to white-black confrontation.

This we must avoid at all times . . . . . In South Africa, labour could only be accommodated on a differential basis"  
(Fanie Botha)

"His (Wiehahn) report is a very skilled, very clever and highly sophisticated recipe for national disaster" (Sheena Duncan of Black Sash)

The above quotes are indicative of the vast manoeuvring taking place in and around the South African labour scene. South African labour is certainly standing at the crossroads insofar as a future for non-racial trade unions is concerned. The Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions (even in their emasculated parliamentary form) have given the non-racial trade unions vital elbow room in which to secure strategic advances as regards securing government recognition of sorts.

On the other hand the non-racial trade unions have to face the fact (as they have done) that the purpose of the commissions was, and is, to gain greater control over labour and to secure the interests of white capital by creating a black middle class and granting non-racial unions token recognition. The commission reports are attempts at (1) modernizing the apartheid infrastructure to some small extent and (2) giving non-racial unions an apparent concession in order to neutralize the possibility of labour unrest sparking off populist outbursts.

Aside from the problems sketched above; the non-racial trade unions are faced with the difficulty inherent in organizing a worker movement and pursuing worker interests in the face of tight legislation.

Another problem is consensus as regards strategy. Some unions feel that workers issues should not be expanded into the community as this could result in the issues being

deflected from the factory floor into the community where these issues could be controlled by a non-worker organization.

Others feel that worker issues and populist issues cannot be separated as the two are interlinked.

Fosatu (Federation of South African Trade Unions) is one of the relatively new and expanding Trade Union organizations faced with these problems. The purpose of this article is to give a brief and general account of Fosatu's formation and development.

Fosatu was formed at a congress of unions at Hammanskraal in April 1979. 13 Unions from different parts of the country were responsible for the formation of the loosely knit federation. Four of the unions had originated in Natal after the 1973 strike in the province. They were part of the Trade Unions Advisory and Co-ordinating body. In 1973 T.U.A.C. dissolved as the co-ordinating body of these four unions which, in turn affiliated to Fosatu where they were influential in shaping Fosatu policy.

From the Transvaal came all the reef-based unions who had broken away from consultative committees or Urban Training Project unions, who had emerged from the struggle in a rather fragmented state and were thus less influential in shaping Fosatu policy.

The remaining unions were registered unions who were disenchanted with the existing trade union federations due to the latter's markedly conservative orientation.

At Hammanskraal the nascent federation resolved to base itself on the five principles enunciated at the congress.

The first principle adopted was the principle of **non-racialism** which was embodied in the constitution and policies of the federation. Fundamental to Fosatu's formation was the strong belief that racial divisions which divide the workers in this country could only be combatted by making non-racialism the prerequisite basis before any dealings could be entered into with government and business.

The second principle was **worker control**. In terms of this all unions under the Fosatu umbrella would work towards worker leadership. This principle stressed direct worker participation in the decision making process as well as direct worker control of all affiliated unions.

Thirdly, the unions had to be strong on the **shop floor**.

The base to effective organization lay with workers at factory floor level. This principle underlined the necessity of having shop stewards and re-iterated their importance in the bargaining process. This principle differed sharply with the attitudes prevalent in the conservative Trade Union Council of South Africa. The registered Tucsas federation was clearly bureaucratic in nature and Tucsas officials had become the centre-pins of the unions and bargained on behalf of the workers. Tucsas operated at a level far removed from the factory floor and the bureaucratic nature of the federation minimized the role of the shop steward to a considerable extent.

The fourth principle was that Fosatu should be a federation consisting of broadly based industrial unions. This principle was adopted in contradistinction to Tucsas which was a narrowly based predominantly craft-based union grouping and other non-racial unions where the tendency was to form general worker unions. Implicit in the formation of a broadly individual union grouping was an acknowledgement on Fosatu's part that workers share experience which cut across industries and the formation of a federation of broadly based industrial unions did not exclude this factor.

The final principle adopted at Hammanskraal was that Fosatu should be a tightly-knit federation.

The federation provided for union autonomy, nevertheless the intention was to promote close union co-operation at all levels, hence the sharing of certain facilities, the pooling of certain resources and common decision-making at certain levels. A tight policy was adopted as to financial matters.

All finances had to be channelled through Fosatu and not individually to affiliates.

The federation adopted this policy regarding the channelling of funds in order to prevent individual unions developing at a quicker rate than other unions as well as to prevent a union becoming beholden to an individual sponsor whether these sponsors were overseas organizations or not.

## GOALS

Fosatu is committed to far-reaching goals for workers in South Africa and, in pursuit of such objectives, has followed a path aimed at avoiding open confrontation with government and big industry. Consistent with this approach all Fosatu affiliates decided to apply for registration after the Wiehahn report and subsequent amendments to the Industrial Conciliation Act which made it possible for the first time for non-racial unions to be registered. A number of conditions were laid by the federation. Affiliates would not accept registration if

- (a) it was not non-racial.
- (b) If the government attempted via the process of registration to impose even greater control over labour beyond the already unacceptable degree of control the government has.
- (c) Fosatu would only accept final registration and not provisional registration. This last stipulation is crucial.

Midway in 1980 all Fosatu unions were given permission to apply for registration on a non-racial basis. At the end of 1980 Fosatu's application for membership had been duly gazetted. Early in 1981 the federation's unions had been registered but on a racial basis. This action on the part of the government was a direct violation of the first condition. Fosatu affiliates thus rejected their registration certificates. Nearly all the federation's affiliates stated that they would appeal against the racial certificates and, failing that, would reconsider their decision to register with a view to de-registering. At present the appeals are in the process of being heard.

Fosatu's attitude towards Industrial councils is highly significant insofar as it reflects what the federation sees as the concept of a trade union.

Fosatu's attitude to the Industrial Council system becomes obvious when the I.C. System is analysed. The system is an attempt to elevate negotiations between capital and labour to national or, at least, regional level. This process leads to a situation whereby bargaining is distanced from the shop floor with the result that the workers' participation in the bargaining process is severely undermined if not done away with altogether. Because the Industrial Council system has a regional and national character it cannot deal quickly and effectively with grievances at shop floor level. Fosatu regards the whole Industrial council system as cumbersome, unwieldy and ineffective in that a more efficient means for the negotiations over, and resolution of, grievances, would be throughhouse agreements entered into between individual companies and their respective shop-steward groupings. □



# FATTIS & MONIS DISPUTE.

## A CASE STUDY OF THE ROLE OF PRESSURE GROUPS IN LABOUR RELATIONS:

By James Leatt (First presented at the Unit for Futures Research Seminar, Stellenbosch, September, 1980)

Not since the nationwide potato boycott of the 1950s has a national boycott threatened. But the dispute between Fattis & Monis and the Food and Canning Workers' Union in 1979 very nearly precipitated one.

This paper sets out to describe the history of the dispute, the nature of the group pressure which it evoked, and the settlement process.

An attempt will be made to draw some lessons from the dispute about the role of pressure groups, the nature of industrial justice, and the effect of "disruptive tactics" such as boycotts. What happens when there is a convergence of black worker interests and consumer power? And what are its implications for managers and unionists?

### THE DISPUTE<sup>1</sup>

The Food and Canning Workers' Union (FCWU) was established in 1941. It began to organize in the Fattis & Monis (F & M) Belville plant in 1953, and even negotiated an early wage agreement. For a time Union activity at F & M lapsed. A revitalized FCWU began organizing at the plant in 1978, apparently without first making its presence known to management. The FCWU was organized into parallel movements — one for Africans and the other for Coloured workers, though it shares offices and objectives.

In March 1979 the workers petitioned the Union to negotiate for better wages and conditions of service, including a R40 p.w. minimum wage and a 40 hour working week (starting wages were about R17 for women and R19 for men). The Union set out its case to F & M, modelled on a Conciliation Board Agreement for the Fruit & Vegetable Canning Ind. which it had negotiated. (In fact the Union also began that negotiation with a demand for R40 p.w. minimum wage and 40 hour week — it did not achieve either).

F & M did not respond favourably to the Union's demands and the Union applied on 12th April 1979 for the appointment of a Conciliation Board to force management to negotiate. (The Union subsequently withdrew this application because it could only officially represent Coloureds at the Board hearing).

According to the Union, on April 19th Management called workers of the milling section and "told them they would have to choose between the Union and the liaison committee which he had recently started" and "if they chose the Union there would be difficult times ahead for them".

After work on April 23rd, 1979 five Coloured workers were "retrenched because of a 25% increase in mechanization in

one department", according to the Company. The Union argued that two of these workers organized the petition to the Union and all were keen Union members, inferring that they were dismissed because of their Union activities.

The following day five more workers were dismissed on the spot because they insisted on reasons for the dismissals the previous day. On April 25th all the workers asked to see the manager. The Department of Labour was summoned and wished to separate the Coloureds and Africans, but the workers refused. Management refused to address them and finally dismissed them — there were some 88 workers in all. F & M believes the workers were striking illegally and were therefore dismissed after proper warning. The Union alleges that the workers were unfairly dismissed and did not strike illegally.

Some issues emerge clearly from the dispute.

- **Communication** was poor between Union and Management
- **Union recognition** : the Company was apparently unwilling to recognize both the registered FCWU and the unregistered (pre-Wiehahn) African FCWU, preferring its own liaison committee.
- **Worker Solidarity** : clearly the workers were unwilling to be segregated into African and Coloured groups despite existing legal requirements. They were consciously at risk in this.

### GROUP PRESSURES

Clearly the framework of the Industrial Conciliation Act was inadequate to handle this dispute. Worker solidarity prevented the FCWU (Coloured) from proceeding within it, and in any event 88 workers had "struck" (Company interpretation) or been "dismissed" (Union interpretation). The Company was rapidly replacing the workers with scab labour.

The workers and the Union had little leverage on the company. Management was saying it would not negotiate, and that the Union's wage demands were inconsistent with government's anti-inflationary policy.

Very soon the Western Cape Traders Association (WCTA) representing 2100 shopkeepers was deploring attempts to set African and Coloured workers off against each other. By early May 1979 Dawood Kahn of WCTA was saying "boycott" was the "only way out" if talks fail.<sup>2</sup> "Workers are consumers and we have a duty to consumers",<sup>3</sup> therefore traders should boycott F & M products.

Then **students** from the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and various teachers training colleges came out in support of

workers and the boycott. The powerful South African Council of Sport (SACOS) came out in support of the boycott, calling on schoolchildren to join it.

Mr. Peter Moni of F & M head office in Johannesburg expressed alarm at the growing boycott saying that until the Conciliation Board met the company could do little. He called for a meeting of employers of the National Chamber of Milling "to change our approach to labour".<sup>4</sup> A mass meeting at the University of Cape Town signalled white student support and solidarity.

The 14000 strong Union of Teachers' Association of S.A. (UTASA) came out in support of the boycott when its President, Mr. Franklin Sonn said:

"Fattis and Monis will do well to remember that the workers who have received such unfair treatment at the hands of the company are the parents of our pupils and their plight has a direct bearing on the children at our schools".<sup>5</sup>

By the end of May many organizations<sup>6</sup> supported boycott action against F & M. These included black traders, teachers, students and pupils, SACOS, trade unions, the Labour Party, Inkatha, with the Black Alliance, churches, women's organizations, white students, etc. Some of these organizations attempted to mediate, but to no avail.

Negotiations began when the W.P. African Chamber of Commerce implemented a boycott of bread from the F & M subsidiary, Good Hope Bakery. The meeting between the Company and the Union broke down over the issue of reinstatement (the Union demand) or re-employment in different jobs (the Company offer).

Late in June a body was formed to co-ordinate boycott action – Community Action Committee representing its organizations. In Johannesburg the S.A. Institute of Race Relations held a meeting where representatives of influential groups including the Labour Party, Inkatha, Committee of Ten (Soweto), the Black Sash and SACOS discussed the boycott. Similar support was coming from Durban.

However, powerful national organizations remained uncommitted, preferring to negotiate. These included the National African Chamber of Commerce (NAFCOC) and the South African Council of Churches (SACC). The Trade Union Council of S.A. (TUCSA), after considerable debate, voted to reject a call to support the boycott (71 against 63 for, 12 abstentions). The Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) also decided against boycott action. A nationwide boycott was however within reach, constituting a powerful leverage on the company. F & M acknowledged that the boycott had bitten deep into its profits and was also seriously impairing its public image.

Some issues emerge clearly from the group pressures exerted by the largely black consumer.

- **Black solidarity** : the range of groups which supported the boycott was impressive, incorporating all black population groups and many interest groups.
- **Community organization** : reading through press accounts of the growing support of the boycott, one is impressed by the organizational skills, swift communication, and level of information available to interested parties.
- **Worker solidarity** : the dispute lasted nearly seven months during which time the affected workers received R15 p.w. plus a meal a day from the FCWU

(which received large sums of money to meet this commitment). Yet the workers remained united. They were often questioned by the police, received pre-dawn visits from Administration Board officials, weathered powerful pressures from the Ciskeian Government and the company to negotiate on an individual basis with the Company.

- **Poor Public Relations** : the Company was poorly advised by public relations consultants who seemed set on turning each new event in the dispute into a confrontation which gained adverse publicity (in the eyes of blacks) for the company.
- **The Union Dilemma** : the union, having acceded to the use of public pressure for a boycott, often found itself in the position where pressure groups called the tune. It experienced a conflict of roles as an instrument of negotiation and a lever for exerting pressure.

## THE MEDIATION

Early in August 1979 the South African Council of Churches (SACC) was approached to support the boycott. Bishop D. Tutu, its General Secretary, offered first to mediate in the dispute. He had a brief meeting with Mr. Peter Moni of F & M before leaving for overseas. I was invited to come to Johannesburg for a meeting with members of the SACC Presidium and representatives of the Company. The upshot was an agreement that I should attempt to mediate in settlement negotiations.

Each party was asked to appoint a negotiator, acceptable to both parties, to act on its behalf. After some difficulty this was achieved and I met with the negotiators to map out a policy:-

It was agreed (a) that we should not rehearse the past history of the dispute – we were not looking for blameworthy culprits but a formula for negotiation:

(b) that neither party should issue press statements during negotiations since these would only escalate the conflict;

(c) that as mediator I should keep a very low profile, acting as a facilitator. The Company was very concerned about third-party involvement in the dispute;

(d) that the Union should present a framework of negotiation as an opening move to give the company specific aspects to respond to;

(e) that a considerable legacy of mistrust had developed which meant both parties were angry and embittered;

(f) that the stage had now been reached where "posturing" and "unbending attitudes" had to be dispensed with in the interests of the workers and the Company.

The issue of third-party involvement in the dispute was a lively one. The Company's negotiator was accustomed to operating within the framework of the Industrial Conciliation Act (ICA) whereas the context of this settlement effort was a virtually nationwide boycott of company products. So the boycott issue overshadowed all else.

My task as mediator was not helped when at a delicate early stage in negotiations Bishop Desmond Tutu in a press conference overseas challenged Denmark to boycott South African coal as a means of exerting pressure for change on South



Africa! The Company was clearly and understandably suspicious about the possibility that should negotiations break down I could invoke SACC support for a boycott of its products, and thus precipitate a nationwide boycott to gain further leverage. I had to make it plain that I was not and could not be a member of the SACC (only churches can), nor was I in any way obliged to follow Bishop Tutu's boycott policy. Indeed, I saw my role primarily as a bridge-builder seeking to interpret the aspirations and difficulties of each party to the other, keeping open the channels of communication we had established through the negotiators, and convening such meetings as were necessary which I would attend as an observer.

After considerable discussion among the affected workers the Union met with the negotiating team to outline its framework. This was surprisingly moderate :

- (a) all workers presently unemployed as a result of the dispute should be **re-employed**, not re-instated in the same jobs as the Union had previously demanded. (A considerable concession).
- (b) workers should be re-employed in the same plant since they had helped build it up.
- (c) the company was to give assurances that workers would not be dismissed for trivial reasons.
- (d) Union was ready to negotiate a time-span during which re-employment would occur.
- (e) re-employment should be at wage levels earned at the time of the dispute.
- (f) all workers and Union would not make new wage demands for affected or already employed workers for a period to be negotiated.

The negotiating team agreed to set up a meeting between representatives of Company and Union, each party having not more than four representatives, excluding negotiators.

I convened a meeting on 15th October between the Union and the Company. The Union was represented by its General Secretary of the FCWU, Mr. Jan Theron, the negotiator Mr. Alan Potash, the Secretary of the AFCWU, Mr. O Mpetha and two Union executives (both of whom were affected workers) Miss S. Saaiman and Mr. Friday Mabikwe. The Company was represented by Mr. Terblanche, Manager of its Belville plant and the negotiator, Mr. Jack Roos. As we could not get agreement on who should be chairman we met without one. I was surprised to discover that the Company did not have a larger delegation, especially that Mr. Peter Moni, the Johannesburg-based Managing Director was absent.

The discussion began when Mr. Roos tabled the Union's framework, commending it as fair. Then Mr. Terblanche made a surprise move. He acknowledged the value of the framework for settling the dispute, but argued that there were two issues — the labour dispute, and the consumer boycott of F & M products, and in the Company's view the **boycott** issue must be settled first. (Even their negotiator was unprepared for this!) The Union responded saying it supported the boycott in principle but had not initiated it, it was initiated by others. Although the Union had no control over the boycott it undertook publicly to call a halt to it if settlement was reached. The Company argued that the boycotters were demanding unconditional re-instatement of the workers while the Union was prepared to negotiate for conditional re-employment! What would be the reaction of the boycotters?

I pointed out that in effect the Company was proposing that the boycotters agree on the terms of settlement **before**

the interested parties had themselves agreed to settle! Obviously boycotters would make more radical demands than the Union could. The Company should negotiate with the Union.<sup>4</sup> If the workers agreed on the settlement terms the boycotters would no longer have sufficient cause to continue the boycott. Settle first, then go to the boycott organizers.

The Union agreed this was the best approach. The alternative meant that third parties would be invited to stake out ground for settlement of a Company-Union dispute! The Union argued that its own credibility as a Union was at stake if it could not achieve a negotiated settlement. It was as much in the Union's interest as management's to settle. A union is not primarily a boycott organization. And boycott organizers would have no cause if a settlement was reached.

The Company now played its full hand by indicating that Mr. Moni was waiting in the wings! The meeting recessed to allow Mr. Terblanche to consult him. When we reconvened the Company reiterated its view that boycott organizers should **first** be approached before details of settlement could be discussed. In spite of strong advice to the contrary Mr. Moni insisted on 'testing the waters' by going to the chief boycotters, Mr. Howa of SACOS, Mr. Allie of WCTA, and Mr. Mandla of WPACOC with the question: "Are you prepared to accept a settlement with which the workers agree?"

Mr. Theron cautioned that the traders' association would understand the need for compromise in the interests of a settlement, but SACOS was likely to take an absolute position - unconditional reinstatement or nothing! Indeed, given the political climate and overseas attitudes, SACOS may be forced to state that the Union had sold out to the Company! Both the Company and the Union were on the same side when it came to their primary interest in a settlement. A boycott organization has another objective, namely the application of pressure to bring about political change in South Africa. At this point the interests of the Company and Union and those of some boycott organizations diverge.

The long meeting broke up with the labour dispute hardly discussed. The Company insisted on discussing terms with WCTA and WPACOC, and probably SACOS. If these parties were agreeable a further settlement meeting could be arranged.

As anticipated the traders agreed to the Union policy but SACOS refused even to see Company representatives! Mr. Howa of SACOS had previously said the boycott would end if the workers were unconditionally reinstated and not victimized in any way.<sup>7</sup>

In the interim the Ciskeian government officials had somehow received the names of the remaining 56 affected workers and put pressure on them individually to negotiate with the Company, while management organized visits to each worker (excluding eight top union members) offering them jobs. SACOS maintained its uncompromising stance. There was general dissatisfaction. Does the Company want to settle? On his own initiative Mr. Theron intervened by visiting SACOS to ask for space to settle on workers' terms.

The dispute at this stage (Early November 1979) appeared to be escalating. Once more both parties were using the Press to argue their cases, and the Company seemed intent on bypassing the Union by negotiating with individual workers and with the Ciskeian government.

Only my direct intervention with the assistance of Mr. Potash, and I suspect a more perceptive newly appointed public relations consultant for the Company, saved the day. On November 6th we began lengthy negotiations on a detailed settlement which finally was agreed by both parties. One of the Company's major dilemmas was how to treat the labour

employed to replace the Union workers. The terms of the settlement were even better than those initially proposed by the Union! As someone put it "when you settle too late you settle for too much".

The basic terms of settlement can be summarized :—

1. the company recognized the Union's right to negotiate,
2. all 56 workers to be re-employed at Belville plant in a phased operation taking about two weeks,
3. no reduction in wages and a guaranteed upgrading,
4. workers and Union were not to pursue new wage demands for one year,
5. no back pay demands,
6. affected African workers to be treated as having service suspended so as not to fall foul of urban residence laws. The Company was to apply for renewal of contracts for black workers.
7. no dismissals for one year except for intoxication or theft, and careful procedures for dismissal were set out, including consultation with Union.
8. the Union was to take positive steps to assist in bringing to an end the boycott of the Company's products.
9. the Company was to assist replacement labour financially and to find new jobs where they had to be retrenched.

The protracted, headline-making dispute was over! And the boycotters subsequently called off the boycott of F & M products.

### SOME ISSUES ARISING FROM THE DISPUTE

#### 1. The Triumph of Experience over Dogma

Reinhold Niebuhr<sup>8</sup> has shown that in the West some of democracy's most cherished gains have been achieved against prevailing ideology or dogma, rather than as a consequence of it. For example the right of workers to bargain collectively, including freedom of association and the right to strike, was achieved in the USA only after a protracted struggle - finally won 1935. At the turn of the century the US Supreme Court ruled that it was the constitutional right of an employer to fire an employee because he was a union member. The F & M dispute ante-dates the Wiehahn report and reveals that the right of workers to associate and bargain collectively is a deeply cherished one. It was achieved outside the existing framework of the ICA and was against the wisdom of prevailing dogma which holds that in the workplace people are Coloured or African **first** and **workers** in a secondary sense. No one who had anything to do with the dispute could fail to be impressed by worker solidarity which transcended race and ethnicity.

#### 2. Justice as more equitable balance of power

Justice in the field of labour relations involves a continuous search for more equitable balances of power.

Management can institutionalize that search by recognizing the important role of unions in this process. F & M took a long time to recognize this and the FCWU did not assist matters by a confrontational stance in response to non-recognition.

I had the feeling that management had a zero-sum concept of power, namely that power is a fixed sum which is diminished if it is shared. And so the Company attempted to hold onto

its power by refusing to recognize union activity in the mistaken belief that power shared is power lost.

Moreover, union recognition also implies that the Union has the right to interpret and state its case in its own terms. The company tended to interpret Union proposals as absolute and unbending when in fact they were opening bids to begin negotiation. Justice demands that management and union definitions of the situations are the raw material out of which agreements can be negotiated so that power imbalances can be corrected.

#### 3. The Use of "Disruptive Tactics"

L. Douwes Dekker<sup>9</sup> has convincingly shown that "effective change in a situation of power imbalance requires two strategies, namely the power strategy and the attitude to change strategy".

However attitude change is not sufficient in itself since men do not change attitudes merely because of moral persuasion and greater education of their perceptions. This is why there is acceptance of the right to strike, the last-resort power strategy in industrial relations. The right to strike is a hard won power strategy in Western democratic experience. It signals a grave imbalance of power, real or imaginary, which can explode into violence.

In the Fattis & Monis dispute we witnessed the large-scale use of another power strategy than strike action, namely the **boycott**. The legal strike is a "disruptive tactic", so too is the boycott. Douwes Dekker explains that society should accept such tactics because:

"the role disruptive tactics (involves) understanding that between violence on the one extreme and co-optation or collusion at the other extreme, lies a range of tactics which facilitate bringing about necessary changes towards justice. Disruptive tactics are therefore to be seen as a form of dissent and as involving a consciously planned choice of action in a situation where deadlocks or crises have occurred".<sup>10</sup>

A great deal of concern has been expressed about the use of disruptive tactics like boycotts in the F & M dispute. I suspect that pressure groups will play an increasingly significant role in **labour** relations because the black community perceives that the power imbalance between employer and worker in South Africa is greater than is usual in industrial societies because workers are black **and** disenfranchized. The boycott is a disruptive tactic aimed at correcting power imbalance when a crisis and deadlock occurs in the workplace. Managers and Unions will have to reckon with this phenomenon by attempting to deal with conflict and dispute, and by not ignoring early warning-signs of the existence of conflict.

The search for more equitable balances of power in the workplace is never easy; the solidarity between black workers and consumers evidenced in the F & M dispute make it an essential quest for all who are interested in justice among managers and unionists. □

(This paper first appeared in the Industrial Relations Journal of S.A.)

## NOTES:

1. Most of the Data used in writing this paper comes from the author's own diary of events. I also wish to thank the Union for giving me ready access to its files on the dispute. I have also made use of Company material relating to the dispute.
2. **Argus**, 7. 5. 1979
3. **Financial Mail**, 11. 5. 1979
4. **Argus**, 14. 5. 1979
5. **Cape Times**, 24, 5, 1979
6. An incomplete list of sympathizers and/or supporters of the boycott follows:  
Cape Town Municipal Workers Association  
Kolbe Society, U C T  
Metal & Allied Workers Union  
W.P.C.A.  
W.C.T.A.  
S.A.C.O.S.  
Labour Party  
General Workers Union  
United Womens Organisation  
Muslim Students Association  
W E P C O C (NAFCOC)  
Nyanga Residents Association  
Guguletu Residents Association  
Belville Technical College  
Hewat Training College  
U-W C

- High School Students  
Witwatersrand Liquor & Catering Trade Employees Union.  
Eastern Province Sweet Food & Allied Workers Union  
Metal & Allied Workers Union  
S A Institute of Race Relations  
Black Sash  
F O S A T U  
Chemical Workers Industrial Union  
Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions  
I U F  
Gwerkschaft Nahrung Genuss (German Foodworkers Union)  
Womens Movement for Peace  
U C T  
Saldru Wiehahn Seminal  
University of Natal (U N B)  
Witwatersrand University Students  
Cape Teachers Professional Association  
National Union of Laundry Cleaning & Dying Workers (Cape)  
Western Province Sweet, Food & Allied Workers Union  
National Union of Motor Assembly & Rubber Workers of S.A.  
Chemical & Allied Workers Union  
Inkatha and Inkatha Womens Movement
7. **Argus**, 13. 10. 1979
  8. Reinhold Niebuhr, **The Irony of American History**, ch.V.
  9. L.C.G. Douwes Dekker "Industrial Peace and Industrial Justice – Are these attainable in the 1980 Decade?" (paper read at S.A. Institute of Race Relations, 23rd January 1980, UCT).
  10. **ibid**, p.10

## The Apartheid Regime : Political Power and Racial Domination.

ed. Robert M. Price and Carl G. Rosberg. (David Philip, Cape Town)

### Reviewed by Francis Antonie

The apartheid regime or order poses problems of interpretation: at one level, that of the perceived, it can be regarded as a conflict between the rival claims of Afrikaner and African nationalisms. This is the dominating theme of this collection of papers, the end product of a colloquium on contemporary South Africa held at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1978.

The opening variation on the dominant theme concerns White politics, with papers by Andre du Toit (on Afrikaner nationalism), Hermann Gilliomee (on the Nationalist Party and the Broederbond) and Heribert Adam (on the failure of political liberalism). While no dramatic new insights are made, these first papers serve as a valuable framework for the succeeding contributions and as a reminder of the stark realities of white hegemony and more specifically of Afrikaner political power.

Two papers on African political movements provide the counter variation. Roland Stanbridge's largely historical paper – "Contemporary African Political Organisations and Movements" – unfortunately, fails to draw a clear distinction between strategies for revolution and a theory of revolution for South Africa. Lawrence Schlemmer's paper also draws on much historical material but focuses specifically on Inkatha.

Inkatha is perhaps not necessarily important intrinsically. Rather, as Schlemmer argues, its potential ability to achieve mass mobilisation could allow it to adopt the strategy, originally proposed in the 1940s by Dr. A. B. Xuma of the A.N.C., whereby the government would be induced to make fundamental change. The importance of this strategy of mass mobilisation is, for Schlemmer, crucial..... for "(in) South Africa, this is perhaps the only peaceful strategy likely to achieve significant results." (p.125)

Martin West in his paper on the urban African population gives a thorough review of both its present state and the relevant legislation, stressing the importance of this population in contributing to the destabilization of the present situation.

On the other hand, Francis Wilson, in his review of current labour issues in South Africa discusses, inter alia, worker resistance in the agricultural sector and submits that this resistance "may yet emerge as more significant than changes elsewhere in the economy" (p. 164). In the section dealing with wages, Wilson argues convincingly that the narrowing of the gap between White and Black wages in the gold mining industry between 1971 – 1976, should be seen not only in terms of internal unrest (the Durban strikes and their ripple-effects) or the rise in the price of gold, but also in terms of the changing international stage, specifically, "the abrupt calling off of the supply of labour from Malawi and the uncertainty regarding labour from Mozambique as a result of the fall of the Portuguese empire." (p. 157).

Philip Bonner, in an otherwise thorough historical survey and critical review of the Black Trade Union movement since World War II surprisingly omits mention of FOSATU. While its draft constitution was approved in October 1978 – too late for the conference – one would have hoped that his revised version of the paper might have included a reference to this important new development.



A paper on the African "homelands" by Newell Stultz is more problematic. Notwithstanding some minor "errors" (publication again outstripped by events – Venda is now "independent", and a typographical error on p. 199: 70,000 for 700,000 Asians in South Africa) Stultz's paper fails to examine the thesis that the policy of Separate Development i.e. the creation of "independent" homelands, is the result of external political pressure. In addition, some discussion of the concept of the right to national self-determination as referred to in the U.N. charter may perhaps have shed light on the problem of non-recognition of the "homelands".

Schlemmer's second contribution to this volume is at once both fascinating as well as sobering. In dealing with the question of change in South Africa, he enquires, by means of attitude surveys what the "various powerful formations of public opinion" are, and concludes that "while Whites still have the time to secure the future and stability of their country . . . . . that is surely very limited." (p.280)

Papers by Kogila Moodley (on South African Indians), Colin Legum (on South Africa in the contemporary world) and Robert Price (on the problem of reform) complete this volume. The latter's paper is more than just a concluding overview of the debate: Price's distinction between apartheid as practice serving the survival of White supremacy and apartheid as doctrine serving the maintenance of Afrikaner identity is a useful one, especially in attempting to understand the apparently contradictory rhetoric surrounding government inspired "reform".

In terms of its stated purpose viz the illumination of the confrontation between Afrikaner and African nationalisms which, as the editors argue, undoubtedly does animate political and social conflict in contemporary South Africa, this volume succeeds. Unfortunately, with one or two exceptions (Bonner's paper) few attempts are made to explore the relationships between class tensions and antagonisms on the one hand and this racial confrontation on the other. In the absence of such an attempt it can be argued that this work does not deal comprehensively with the apartheid regime – but where then should ideology end and scepticism begin. . . . .?

## ARMIES OF THE NIGHT

Philip Mayer (ed.): **Black Villagers in an Industrial Society**  
Oxford U.P. 1980, xiii + 369 pp. R14,50.

A Review by M. G. Whisson

If one assumes that the Xhosa-speaking people, whose ancient lands covered most of the region from East Griqualand to Port Elizabeth, can be considered as having an essential cultural unity, then **Black Villagers** can be seen as the fourth part of an on-going saga which began in 1931 when a young woman "then serious . . . but with great charm" (Richards 1985 : 3) went and sat in a Pondoland trading station to listen and learn about the ways of the Pondo

"the last tribe in the Cape Province to come under British administration; and (whose) chiefs were left more power than any other in the Cape Province". (Hunter 1961:8). **Reaction to Conquest**, the outcome of those observations, explored the traditional rural institutions; the impact of European culture in the development of "school" or "dressed" people (Ibid: 7); the form taken by the urban community of Xhosa-speakers in East London, and an account of the Xhosa-speakers of white owned farms. She noted that in the towns "there is a mixture of Pondo, Fingo, Xhosa and Thembu. There are, however, no great differences between tribes". (Ibid: 438). This long descriptive work set out the themes which the subsequent volumes have pursued, with variations of time, place and theoretical preoccupation indicating the processes of change, both among the people studied and among those who have studied them.

The second part of the saga was the multi-disciplinary and heavily statistical study, **Keiskammahoek Rural Survey** (Wilson et al : 1952), which described the social and economic conditions of a part of the Ciskei from which many of the pre-colonial Xhosa had been expelled in the middle of the 19th century. The area had then been colonised by Fingo who had fought on the British side in the frontier wars: by white settlers, many of German origin, and by the returning Xhosa who sought to recreate their society under radically changed political circumstances. The study dealt with the period 1948-50, before the full impact of National Party rule had been felt in the region.

The third part saw Philip and Iona Mayer replace Monica (Hunter) Wilson as the guiding genius and emerged as the **Xhosa in Town** trilogy, fieldwork having been carried out between 1956 and 1959. The first set of full length studies of a black urban community which retained a wide range of links with rural areas, the trilogy (Reader 1961; Mayer 1963; Pauw 1963) has become the most widely read and quoted anthropological work to emerge from South Africa since - 1950.

**Black Villagers**, for which the field work was carried out in the second half of the 1970's, brings the story up to date, and is the heir to a most distinguished tradition. Judged by any standards other than those, it is a fine piece of work, but it lacks both the theoretical and regional cohesion of its ancestors. As a result, it is less a book than a collection of individually interesting articles around the dominant theme of modern black social history - the impact of a modern industrial society upon the rural areas from which it draws a substantial proportion of its less-skilled labour.

The first article, by Mayer, is entitled "the origin and decline of two rural resistance ideologies", and endeavours to present the history of the "red" and "school" cleavage in those terms. Mayer soon impales himself on the horns of a dilemma from which he seems unable to extricate himself. He wants to apply a generally simplistic marxist analysis to a problem which is much too complex for such a model. Thus, the co-option of the Fingo by the British, the conversion of people who lived close to the mission stations, schools and trade routes to Christianity and western consumer values, and hence the development of a self-conscious group of évolués, is presented as an "ideology of resistance" (my emphasis). It is, from his own evidence, nothing of the sort, although from it have developed the modern urban resistance movements. Mayer compounds this felony by references to marxist gurus which are largely gratuitous and even downright misleading e.g. "What consent Black villagers gave to White domination was at best

'obtained under duress, passive acceptance, lukewarm adherence', but rarely from 'shared conviction' (Godelier, 1978 : 767 " (p.4). The context is "red" and "school" and one might imagine the summary of attitudes to reflect Godelier's view of the Xhosa — it does not, but is taken from a general analysis of domination through "violence and consent" which at that point links the four elements that Mayer lists in a single set. Similar examples of this are found in references to Althusser (pp.13, 44 twice) Poulantzas (p.29) and Marx (p.55). This pretension can impress only the most naive of readers and certainly not those who had radical objections to his **Townsmen or Tribesmen** (Magubane 1973). Beinart and Spiegel provide much more convincing samples of the radical genre, without allowing it to become a strait jacket.

What is a more interesting and challenging problem is why a substantial proportion of the Xhosa-speakers did not follow the path of the "school" people, but remained "red" for as long as material conditions permitted. History has played a part - those groups who converted or were co-opted during the wars were seen as traitors both to the policy and the culture, and refusal to be co-opted could be seen in part as a moral or ideologically inspired response, hence legitimately "resistance". Geography and accidents of location also played a part — the areas most remote from the motor roads, trading stations and missions have tended to be more conservative. Population density and the carrying capacity of the land have also played a major role, as one cannot "build the **umzi**" (develop the homestead and estate) if there is no land or grazing in which to invest earnings in the traditional way. Of no less importance, perhaps, was the observation made by some conservatives, that while being "school" might give a man a veneer of success, education tended to increase a person's desire for consumer goods more rapidly than it could provide him with the skills necessary to meet those needs. The school man might earn more in the cities than the red man on the mine, but at the end of a migrant career he had no more to show for it, but a hunger for western consumer goods. In short, it was not **obviously** advantageous to change one's lifestyle and to rebel against the wisdom of the traditionalists where there was good land enough to maintain traditions.

The squeeze on land as population densities grew, and the entry of educated blacks into the wider range of relatively pleasant occupations over the past twenty years or so, has accelerated the erosion of the red tradition. Today neither the school tradition of seeking to **earn** quality by adopting white ways, nor the red tradition of eschewing them, characterises many black villagers. Both traditions have proved unviable, and the new synthesis is mobilising labour power to **demand** equality, whilst affirming its pride in its Xhosa or black cultural roots. The synthesis is taking place at different rates in different areas, for much the same reasons as they varied in their responses to colonial rule in the first place. The evidence for this process is plentiful in the articles by Beinart, Manona, McAllister and O'Connell as well as in the many secondary sources and fieldnotes cited by Mayer.

Beinart contributes an analytical historian's piece on "labour migration and rural production: c 1900-50" a carefully documented and valuable adjunct to processes not adequately analysed in **Reaction to Conquest**. He stresses "that the process of capitalist penetration, the responses of rural producers, and the patterns of migrancy varied considerably from area to area", (p.81) and proceeds to illustrate the distinctive characteristics of the process in Pondoland

which, after a late start, was subjected to mine recruitment and gruesome sugar plantation recruitment in the wake of the 1897 rinderpest epidemic (in terms of its economic impact Pondoland's equivalent of the Xhosa cattle killing half a century previously). From then onwards, individual strategies aimed at economic growth (or mere survival) increasingly came to be subordinated to structural constraints. As the capacity of the land to meet the needs of the expanding black population declined, so white controls over black mobility increased. Conservatism which led men to remit home a very high proportion of their earnings to "build the **umzi**" retarded the process of increasing dependence on migrant labour, but it could not reverse it.

McAllister complements the historical perspectives of Mayer and Beinart with an elegant anthropological interpretation of Gcaleka (Xhosa) rituals associated with the migrant labour process. The area in which he worked is isolated and "red". Migrant labour is viewed as a regrettable necessity to sustain life and to build up the **umzi**, hence the ancestral shades are concerned. Ritual identifies and transcends the moral ambiguity of the regrettable necessity, justifying the migrants' trips and minimising the disruption they cause the community. Departing migrants are reminded of their obligations before they leave home and, through the ritual and oratory of beer drinks, the whole community (the dead and the living) is brought together. The migrant, fortified, goes to work, much as an initiate goes into seclusion, a warrior into battle, a hunter into the forest. He goes to achieve his one purpose and to return. When he does get back, the beer drinks, speeches and mandatory gift-giving serve to restore him to his place in the community and to give social recognition to his achievement in helping his people. The presentation is generally very clear, although there are some lapses in style e.g. "The failure of the millennium in 1858, however, decimated Xhosa country . . ." (p.206).

The contrast between McAllister's Gcaleka parish and Manona's Keiskammahoek village could scarcely be greater, as Manona shows in his "Marriage, family life and migrancy in a Ciskei village". Once the great place of the Rharhabe chief, Burnshill was cleared of Xhosa during the frontier wars and settled with Fingo converts around a Church of Scotland mission station. The village is close to the main road linking Alice to King William's Town, and an agricultural college was built on its outskirts. This is "school" country, with freehold and quitrent land tenure. Manona compares the village as it was during the Keiskammahoek Rural Survey, with its present condition, expanded by an influx of Xhosa immigrants mainly from white-owned farming areas. Those who own land generally have education and skills too, so their menfolk at least work almost permanently in the urban areas, and perceive their property as an insurance rather than as a productive resource. The landless immigrants to Burnshill are forced to seek contract jobs in the mines or construction industry. For nearly all, the traditional loyalties of lineage and locality are long lost. The small matrifocal family is replacing the patriarchal homestead as the basic unit, and marriage bonds are weakening.

The implication of Manona's material is that the people of Burnshill, and presumably many other similar areas, have not been able to choose between one ideology and another in their response to white hegemony, but that they have made individual adaptations to the narrowing range of options in order to survive in, or make the most of, the particular environment and set of opportunities confronting them.

O'Connell's material on the Xesibe takes us closer to the Pondo end of the Xhosa-speaking spectrum, far from the missionised Ciskei villages. He describes a community in which there is a minority of "reds" (18%) and "gentlemen" or "school" (21%) and a majority of "rascals" (61%) who fall between those traditional categories. In the urban literature the "rascals" are described as "semi-urbanised" (Wilson & Mafeje 1963 : 21) or "semi-Red" (Pauw 1963 : 42). While these categories have their own Xhosa terms to describe them, their relevance appears to be decreasing as the common experiences of all rural Xhosa-speakers become more significant than the attachment of their parents to the mission school or to the ancestors. The material is most interesting where it describes the bases of the groups who engage in faction fights — youth organisations recruited on the basis of generally "rascal" and territorial affiliations. There has also been some hostility between the three groupings, which can be interpreted in terms of sub-cultural clashes, but the trend is towards a community in which socio-economic class differentiation rather than cultural values will be the basis for cleavages and conflict.

Spiegel's article takes us out of Xhosa-speaking country into two villages on the western plain of Lesotho. Having given some space to establishing his credentials with his neo-marxist co-ideologues, which only devotees will appreciate, he presents an admirably clear account of the rise and fall of the domestic economy of families dependent on migrant labour as they pass through various stages of their domestic developmental cycle. One is struck by the remarkable "fit" between the migrant labour system and the operation of Lesotho's land tenure system, so that the men have virtually no choice other than to seek work as migrants, whilst in their later years they can eke out a bare living on the fields which they have retained as a form of insurance against their retirement. The households which do not follow the normal pattern — those with women heads, those without land, and those which gain an income from state employment and trade, for the most part also depend, indirectly, on the flow of remittances for their subsistence or success. One is left with the impression of a society on a treadmill. The losers are those who can never obtain full control over any means of production other than their own labour, be it utilised in the mines or on the fields that revert to the chief if they are left fallow too long or when the occupant dies. The winners are the chiefs who control access to the land, and the mining companies which need make little contribution to the costs of reproducing their labour supply.

The final chapter, by McNamara, takes us to the other end of the oscillating migrant's chain, exploring some aspects of what is called "social life" in a gold mine hostel. This is a topic which really demands a volume on its own, for just as there are dramatic differences between life in school villages like Burnshill and in red parishes like the Shixini parish that McAllister describes, so there is much more to be said about life in dock workers compounds, construction company barracks, the mining hostels and the other places in which the migrants live between their working hours.

McNamara sets out to explain why faction fights break out in hostels where 3,000 or more men, of different language groups and nationalities, live in close proximity to each other with little to do in their spare time apart from sleeping and drinking. The evidence that he presents suggests an interesting dilemma. A century of migrant labour on the mines has not yet produced a strong class consciousness, as the oscillating system ensures that the migrants maintain

their primary ties to their rural homes, and their strong orientation to their homeboys and co-ethnics in their spare time. Worker solidarity, which conflicts with the goal of "building the **umzi**" at least in the short run, is present mainly in those who spend long periods at each mine, or who come from the better educated regions such as Zimbabwe or Ciskei. The strong ethnic orientation is consistent with the maintenance of the cheap labour system, the use of long-staying and better education migrants consistent with higher productivity. The co-residence of those with growing worker consciousness and those with well sustained homeland priorities is an explosive mix. If this analysis is correct, then the mines will soon have to make some difficult decisions with ramifications for all their labour catchment areas. For a century they have flourished on the cultural capital of the societies from which they have drawn their labour, as the traditional values of home-building have dove-tailed well with the demand for oscillating, rurally orientated workers. But the capital is exhausted in some areas and diminishing in all, at the same time as the demands of secondary industry for black labour are growing more sophisticated. As the biggest employer, the mining industry will be at the centre of the process of transforming migrants into true proletarians, settled with their dependents within easy reach of their work. If it fails to achieve this peacefully, the alternative is going to make the past decade of faction fights and confrontations seem like scraps in the nursery.

**Black Villagers** is, with a few lapses, a remarkably readable book for one pitched at the serious academic level. For anyone who cares about the future of southern Africa, and the evolving relationships between the mining core and the rural peripheries, it must be required reading. For most whites, the black migrants are the silent army of the night, passing unseen between their rural homes and the urban or mining compounds, where they stoke the boilers of the South African economic miracle. Mayer and his co-workers have pierced that night with a few penetrating shafts of light, prefiguring an awful dawn.

## REFERENCES

- |                           |      |  |
|---------------------------|------|--|
| Godelier, M               | 1978 | Infrastructure, Societies and History<br><b>Current Anthropology 19</b>  |
| Hunter, M.                | 1961 | <b>Reaction to Conquest</b><br>Oxford U.P. (1936)  |
| Magubane, B.              | 1973 | The "Xhosa" in town, re-visited urban Social Anthropology: a failure in method and theory. <b>American Anthropologist</b> . Vol. 75 p.1701 ff.   |
| Mayer, P.                 | 1963 | <b>Townsmen or Tribesman</b> .<br>Oxford U.P.  |
| Pauw, B.A.                | 1963 | <b>The Second Generation</b><br>Oxford U.P.  |
| Reader, D.H.              | 1961 | <b>Black Man's Portion</b><br>Oxford U.P.  |
| Richards, A.I.            | 1975 | Monica Wilson — an appreciation. in Whisson, M.G. & West, M.E. (ed.),<br><b>Religion and Social Change in Southern Africa</b> .<br>David Philip. |
| Wilson, M. et al          |      | <b>Keiskammahoek Rural Survey</b><br>(4 Vols.) Shuter & Shooter.   |
| Wilson, M. and Mafeje, A. | 1963 | <b>Langa</b> . Oxford U.P.   |